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ABSTRACT

This study examined the work experiences of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges. In-depth interviews with six such non-faculty staff at each of three Illinois community colleges (n=18) revealed the nature of their work, their perceptions about their duties and status, and their experiences with decision making. Findings of the study are presented in three main sections: a look at the daily work of these specialists, their views on being specialists and professionals, and key themes related to their sense of place in the community college (voice, importance, status, mobility, and professional development). Most of the interviewees saw their work as being important to the mission of their institutions. They also saw their work in their community colleges as a career and cared about their futures, and their mobility, in their institutions. The specialists interviewed for this study tended to perceive their institutions as hierarchical, with administrators and faculty occupying higher rungs on the employee ladder. Their lesser status as employees belied their equivalent educational credentials and the autonomy, professional authority, and general responsibility they exercised in their daily work. The theme of perception surfaced repeatedly in this study-in terms of the specialists' perceptions of their institutions, their coworkers, and their status, and in terms of their perceptions of other's perceptions of them. (Contains 115 references.) (EMH)

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE SPECIALISTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK LIVES OF MASTER'S PREPARED PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN

HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

KIM GIBSON-HARMAN

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by reminding me that your lives were still proceeding as usual, you kept me balanced, reaffirmed my priorities, made me laugh, supported my efforts, and inspired me to keep working toward my goals. I hope that maybe, in different ways, you each may have gotten a few things out of this experience too.

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I sought to understand the work experiences of an understudied group of higher education professionals--master's prepared professional staff in community colleges. Three main research questions informed my inquiry: (1) What is the nature of the work of various master's prepared professionals in community colleges, and how do these individuals describe and assess their work lives? (2) How do these individuals make sense of themselves as professionals, and how do they believe they are perceived by others (in terms of authority, autonomy, and status) in their community college setting? (3) How do master's prepared professionals describe and evaluate their experiences with decision making at their institutions? In-depth interviews were conducted with six master's prepared professional staff members (non-faculty) at each of three Illinois community colleges (N=18).

Findings of the study are presented in three main sections: a look at the daily work of these "specialists," their views on being specialists and professionals, and key themes related to their sense of place in the community college (voice, importance, status, mobility, and professional development). Most of the interviewees saw their work as being important to the mission of their institutions. They saw their work in their community colleges as a career, and cared about their futures--and their mobility--in their institutions. The specialists interviewed for this study tended to perceive their institutions as hierarchical, with administrators and faculty occupying higher rungs on the employee

ladder. Their lesser status as employees belied their equivalent educational credentials and the autonomy, professional authority, and general responsibility they exercised in their daily work. The theme of perception surfaced repeatedly in this study--in terms of the specialists' perceptions of their institutions, their coworkers, and their status, and in terms of their perceptions of others' perceptions of them. This unique constellation of perception and positionality was found to play a significant role in shaping the work worlds of the specialists interviewed and the limitations they felt in them.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

It was the final meeting of the graduation committee at a large suburban community college in the Midwest. The committee was comprised of faculty, administrators, and a few professional staff. As the group worked its way down a checklist of preparations for graduation, which was coming up in a couple of weeks, the topic of graduation robes came up. All student and faculty robes had been ordered, but there was one "problem." Mr. Y, a master's-prepared professional employee in the college's business office, was planning to sit with the faculty participating in graduation, and had ordered a robe for himself. It turned out he had a daughter graduating, and he wanted to be able to assist in handing her the diploma. Apparently, this was highly irregular. Only faculty were supposed to participate in the graduation ceremony, not professional staff. After some discussion, it was decided that the committee would let it go for this time, to avoid embarrassing Mr. Y. Next fall, however, this issue would definitely be the topic of further discussion by the committee.

The ranks are real separate here. . . . There's real lines here. . . and I have faculty people who have come downstairs who are younger than I am, and they want to be called by "Mrs.'" Several faculty people came for flu shots, and they scheduled their appointment by "Mrs. Whoever," and I called her Mrs. and she called me [first name].

--a master's-prepared staff member at a community college

The "proper place" of master's-prepared staff who do not hold faculty rank and who work in community colleges is something that is not discussed openly. These individuals frequently are assumed to hold lower status than their community college faculty colleagues, 62.5% percent of whom have master's degrees themselves (Sax,

Astin, Arredondo, & Korn, 1996, p. 28). In institutions with a vast array of roles in and relationships to the communities they serve, community colleges utilize a staffing model that includes, in addition to their faculties, numerous professional staff who provide services directly to students or services essential to the functioning of the institution. Interestingly, many of these master's-prepared staff are largely ignored—by the community college literature, by staff development units in their own institutions, and by some colleagues, who see them as somewhat invisible, peripheral or, at best, the people who work in the wings to help the "real" actors get ready to go on stage. What are their work lives like? Do they consider their employment a career? How do they perceive institutional morale? How do they see their role in carrying out their college's mission? How might recognition of this group be important to community colleges as they look to the future?

An Unstudied Group

One might ask, "Why bother to study this group of professionals?" After all, this group comprises a small percentage of the people working at a community college, at least in Illinois. According to Illinois Community College Board statistics for Fall, 1997, 28.5% of full-time employees at Illinois community colleges categorized as "academic support," supervisory," or "professional/technical" held master's degrees.[1] When all full-

[1] The Illinois Community College Board (1999a), in a table entitled, "Degree Level of Illinois Community College Staff, Fall 1997" provides headcount data for the following employee groups: Teaching Faculty, Academic Support, Administrative, Supervisory, Professional/Technical, Clerical, Custodial/Maintenance, and Other. Within each classification category, the statistics are further grouped into Master's, Doctorate, and Professional degree categories. Since the Academic Support, Supervisory, and Professional/Technical classifications are likely to represent many individuals in the target group of this study, I focused on statistics for these three groups. While 28.5% of full-time employees in these groups have a master's

time employees (all categories) are considered in the aggregate, master's level employees in these three groups comprise a mere 5.8% of the overall total (Illinois Community College Board, 1999a).[2] However, it is important to note that master's prepared professional staff are part of a larger body of "support staff" personnel whose ranks have increased tremendously in American higher education over the last twenty-five years. Grassmuck (1990) indicates that, nationwide, between 1975 and 1985 alone, there was a 61.1% increase in the number of "college employees whose jobs require college degrees but do not involve teaching or research." Then, between 1985 and 1990, the percentage of what are termed "middle-level professionals" in academe increased another 28% (Grassmuck, 1991). Since this group includes (but is not limited to) master's level professional staff, it is likely that current percentages reflect this growth and will continue to do so.

There are three main reasons why I chose to study master's prepared professional staff in community colleges. The first reason relates to the individuals themselves, and the work they do. The work of "professional" or "academic" staff (as they are frequently labeled) is quite varied and colorful, and helps illustrate in much greater detail what community colleges "do." Numerous studies have sought to provide documentation of the work of faculty members, mostly at universities and four year colleges, but also specifically at community colleges (most notably Seidman, 1985). A group of "invisible faculty"-- part time, non-tenure track faculty-- have recently been identified and studied

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degree, 69% have a bachelor's degree or less, 2% have a doctorate, and .35% have a professional degree. (Percentages were calculated by this researcher; total may vary slightly from 100% due to rounding.)

[2] Again using the ICCB data (1999a), I found that while master's-prepared staff in the Academic Support, Supervisory, and Professional/Technical groups comprise 5.8% of all full-time employees, bachelor's or

closely by Gappa and Leslie (1993). But what about master's prepared professional staff, who might be included in what Deal (1994) calls the "behind-the-scenes" worker? It is unlikely that community colleges could accomplish their missions of serving multiple facets of their communities without the expertise of their non-faculty professional staff. Yet even well-known volumes on community colleges, such as The American Community College (Cohen and Brawer, 1996), and Innovation in the Community College (O'Banion, 1989), make scant mention of the work of professional staff, suggesting that this is not a group worthy of study. Ratcliff's (1994) edited volume, Community Colleges, sparks hope with a section entitled, "The Professional Staff," but the section contains four articles—all written about faculty. Understanding the contributions of these non-faculty "specialists" to the late-twentieth century community college, with its myriad goals and constituencies served, was a major impetus undergirding this study.

My second reason for studying professional staff relates to the vignettes provided at the beginning of this chapter, namely the irony that, in institutions which were largely founded on egalitarian ideals, a subtle class stratification exists among employees. I wondered about the "second class" status of master's level professional staff and what, if anything, contributed to this perception.

Finally, I chose to study this group largely "just for the sport of it"—the intellectual sport, that is. This study provided an opportunity to examine the organizational models in use at community colleges, with a backward glance at where they originated and how history has shaped the present. Additionally, this investigation--

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less comprise 14%, doctorally-prepared make up .4%, and staff with other professional degrees represent

with all its backward, inward, and peripheral glancing—held strong promise of producing insights that could inform the practice of administrators in various areas of the community college, assist human resources departments in attending to the development of this employee group, and influence how faculty members perceive and interact with their non-faculty, professional colleagues.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this baseline study was to explore and understand how master's level professional staff make sense of their professional roles and responsibilities in community colleges. What were the common threads that bound this group of eclectic individuals together? What distinguished this group from their faculty colleagues? Specifically, I was interested in understanding how this group described their workplace experiences and constructed a "sense of place" within community colleges, particularly in terms of how they viewed their work and activities, professionalism, and participation in institutional life, including decision making.

The main research questions guiding this study were as follows:

- What is the nature of the work of various master's-prepared professionals in community colleges, and how do these individuals describe and assess their work lives?
- How do these individuals make sense of themselves as professionals, and how do they believe they are perceived by others (in terms of authority, autonomy, and status) in their community college setting?

.07% of total full-time employees in community colleges.

- How do master's-prepared professionals describe and evaluate their experiences with decision making at their institutions?

Definition of Terms and Research Subject Pool

In order to narrow the focus of this project, the group of individuals being studied had to be clearly defined. First, it was important to clarify the use of the term "staff." Although occasionally used to refer to all the employees of an institution, including faculty, administrators, and non-faculty (Smith, 1989), or just the faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Ratcliff, 1994), in this study, I used "staff" to mean those non-faculty personnel working in a higher education institution (Bess, 1982; Cassara, 1983; Hageseth & Atkins, 1989; Harvey, 1985; Kuceyeski, 1995; Marciano & Kello, 1995; Takahata & Armstrong, 1995; Wallace, 1995). Second, the group of "staff" examined in this study was narrowed down further to include only individuals who held a master's degree. Since a master's degree is generally a prerequisite for entry-level employment as faculty in a community college (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Ratcliff, 1994), I wondered if this group in particular was sometimes baffled by the apparent stratification between faculty and staff.

Since the professionalism of master's-prepared community college staff was under consideration in this study (especially in relation to the second research question), it was also essential to specify what was meant by "professionalism." Rifkin (1998) was helpful in this regard. Drawing heavily from the work of Cullen (1978), Rifkin identified several dimensions of professionalism, subdividing them along "occupational" and "individual" lines, and then used these dimensions as a framework for her analysis of full- and part-time community college faculty. The occupational dimensions that had a

bearing on the present study included "the complexity of the occupation in relationship to data and people, length of training, and the degree of representation by formal associations" (p. 2). Rifkin's individual dimensions of professionalism related more to attitudes of workers, and those identified by Rifkin which were explored herein included "knowledge acquisition, integration, application, and practice (scholarship); service ethic; and autonomy" (p. 4).

Significance of the Study

Since master's level professional staff have seldom been studied before, this study provides an important contribution to the knowledge base about community college personnel. Documentation of their roles and daily work lives helps to fully illustrate what happens at today's community colleges, providing insights into who the people are who help carry out institutional missions. Aside from its illustrative role, this study informs practice as well. Community colleges are, by and large, interested in meeting the educational needs of the communities they serve and interested in demonstrating to the business world that, although they are educational institutions with all the trappings, they are current and even forward-thinking in their approaches to organizational behavior and employee relations (Alfred & Carter, 1997; Zemsky & Massy, 1995). Maximizing organizational performance depends on meeting the higher order needs of all employees, not just one group (Senge, 1990). With its focus on master's-prepared professional staff, this study produced findings that challenge organizational paradigms that have existed since the "junior college" days and have come to define our understandings of the "community college" idea.

Limitations to the Study

There were two possible limitations to this study, both of which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three. The first related to generalizability of findings. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, specifically an open-ended interview format that included a small number of interviewees and institutions in Illinois. While it was hoped that the information gathered would be rich, such a small sample could not produce results generalizable across all public community colleges, in Illinois or elsewhere, and I make no claim of this sort. My aim was to understand how master's-prepared professional staff in this study made sense of their professional roles, responsibilities, and "place" in their respective community colleges, in hopes of identifying beginning conceptual points for future investigations.

The second potential limitation related to my own experience as a master's level professional staff member in a community college, which indeed sparked my interest in this study. It is common for researchers to develop an interest in a topic based on personal or professional experience, and this can be a boon to them as they develop a framework for the study and maintain the drive to complete it (Ely et al., 1991). Such familiarity can also be a source of researcher bias, and careful steps must be taken to avoid such bias (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In Chapter Three, where I tackle issues of trustworthiness and reflexivity, I describe how I addressed this potential bias during the course of my study.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> *The most important assets of any organization are its human resources, the individuals who carry on the day-to-day work of the organization. In academic institutions attention is paid to the faculty, those who fulfill the primary purposes of the institutions and who also share, to some extent, in its governance. Increasingly, attention is given to students both as consumers of the institutions "products" and as products themselves. But what about the staff of the organization? (Hageseth & Atkins, 1989, p. 173)*

> *In a movie theatre, when the movie ends, people get up and leave and what's rolling on the screen? Hundreds and hundreds of names without whom that film never would have happened. We lump these together into what we call the hidden cast. There's a real resource there. . . typically a lot more people than you ever see in the spotlight. (Deal, 1994, p.iv)*

In order to help illustrate the need for this study and embark upon it in an informed manner, it is necessary to situate the questions at hand in the context of what has gone before—meaning both history and previous research. In this chapter, literature pertinent to both is examined. First, I provide a brief history of the development of junior and community colleges, with comments on how the configurations of faculty and staff developed concurrently. This will provide the context for further consideration of organizational models as they apply to present day community colleges; specifically, the bureaucratic, collegial, cultural and political models each are relevant and offer useful

lenses for viewing today's community colleges. Next, I examine research that has been conducted in the area of academic work and working relationships, especially in the community college. Such a review offers examples of previous research which I did or did not wish to emulate; it also documents the originality of the present study, further establishing the warrant for such research. Finally, a conceptual framework for the study is presented, by way of a brief foray into the literature on organizational development and social psychology. Ideas relating to how a lower-status employee group situates itself within a larger organization, and how it is situated by the majority and the forces of history and habit, are explored.

Community College History

An historical examination of the origination of the junior college idea and its subsequent evolution into the community college provides a useful lens for understanding the organizational structures that have come to characterize two-year institutions. In this section, I address the following questions:

- How did the junior college get its start?
- What organizational and cultural aspects of university life were carried over into the new, two year college model?
- How and when did the community college idea evolve?
- As community colleges grew, how did their faculty and staff configurations evolve to help them accomplish their missions?

The Junior College

Daniel Coit Gilman, first president of Johns Hopkins University, identified the years 1869 to 1902 as "the university era" (Westmeyer, 1985, p. 84). It was during this time that, stimulated by the Morrill Acts, the influence of the German university model, and other social and economic factors, the American university emerged in a form similar to that which we know today—sprawling, multilayered, somewhat bureaucratic, and yet faculty-centered. Emphasis was placed on the quest for knowledge as well as on teaching, and this dual responsibility was sometimes seen as a dichotomy by faculty, who found the two difficult to balance (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Rudolph, 1990; Westmeyer, 1985). One thing that many people are not aware of is the strong influence that the proliferation of colleges and universities had on the standardization and overall quality of secondary education. Around the turn of the century, discussion took place regarding the idea of lengthening the time that students were in secondary school, to ensure their preparedness for upper-level college work. William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago proposed that perhaps what was called secondary education could be broadened to include one year before and two years beyond the four years that had become known as "high school." If students were coming to college better prepared than say, fifty years prior, could not the length of time in college be reduced to three years, or even two? (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

Harper proposed making a distinction between the lower level, or first two years of a college education (which he termed the "collegiate") and the latter two years (which he termed "university"). He is credited for being the first to use the term "junior college" and "senior college" to refer to these two-year blocks. The idea was not entirely novel,

however; other institutions, including Michigan, Minnesota, and Cornell, had also worked during the late nineteenth century at distinguishing the work of the first two years of college from the latter two (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). It was Harper who helped "sell" people on the junior college idea, although many bristled at the idea of actually extending secondary education two years and making it end with grade fourteen. If grades twelve and thirteen were taken at a junior college that had been split off from a university, would this make the lower-division faculty more like high school teachers? Faculty worried that their professional status and decision making power in the university, which had been enhanced by the rise of the research university, would be eroded. Were the proposed junior colleges indeed extensions of high school, or were they the beginning of college?

The board of education in Joliet, Illinois, took the former tack when it established the nation's first junior college around the turn of the century, although it was not formally known as such at first. They extended secondary education in their community by two years. Key to the success of this innovation were the relationships the board cultivated (with the assistance of Harper) with the Universities of Illinois and Michigan, where successful students were given advanced standing when they entered as third year students. Another way that early junior colleges sprang up was also based on an idea credited to Harper. Weaker four-year institutions were encouraged to scale down their aspirations and focus on the first two years of instruction only, becoming junior colleges. Brubacher and Rudy (1976) note that, while there were approximately 52 two-year colleges in 1920, this number had increased to 610 by the beginning of World War II, and to 1,100 by 1970 (p. 256).

Emulating Universities

Although founded in various ways, the early junior colleges generally prized their status as colleges of a sort. Brick (1994) notes:

> The new institution was christened "junior" and in its early infancy bore unmistakable evidence of the relationship which its name implied. The junior college inherited a number of characteristics from the four-year colleges and became practically a replica of the first two years of the regular college. (p. 49)

This meant that instructional personnel at junior colleges were referred to as "faculty," and organized into departments and sometimes schools, just as at universities. Just as the organizational structures of emerging universities became larger and complex in form, with layers of status and authority, so too, did the junior colleges. Palinchak (1973) notes that such practices as rank, tenure, AAUP membership, and faculty governance were all carried over into the junior/community college, almost to a point of "overkill" (p. 253). There were some differences in the work of the faculty, however. The most obvious difference was the lack of emphasis on research at the junior college. The focus of their work has been predominantly on teaching, and not on generating new knowledge, so the "publish or perish" adage has not been something that these faculty have needed to worry about. Palmer (1994) summarizes data indicating that faculty interest in and time spent on research at universities has been and is far greater at four year institutions than at two-year colleges, but goes on to explain how, if "scholarhsip" can be more broadly defined, many of their activities could be categorized as such.

Evolution of the Community College

There were additional differences in the work of the faculty, and in the institutional and societal environment in which they worked, which eventually led to

further change for the junior college. Brubacher and Rudy (1976) and Diener (1994) outline several of these changes, including the notion of terminal versus transfer curricula, increased attention to counseling and guidance for students, and changing technology and employment needs that made vocational training a necessity. Late in the first half of the twentieth century, junior colleges acknowledged their community function, and their charge to improve the lives of the local citizenry, both individually and collectively. Brick (1994) notes, "Community service is a rather recent development. There is little in the literature prior to 1930 which reveals this new conception of the junior college" (p. 52). He goes on to explain how junior colleges worked closely with business and government to meet training needs during World War II, a new pattern of operating that was lauded by the President's Commission on Higher Education, who first used the term "community college" in a report in 1947 (President's Commission, 1948). In addition, after World War II, when the GI Bill dramatically increased student numbers and altered the composition of the student body, the junior colleges were seen as having an important role as providers of opportunity for economic and social mobility.

With the community as the clientele, then, the breadth and scope of what community colleges sought to accomplish expanded greatly. Diener (1994) notes that the original terminal and transfer education functions of the junior college were not cast aside, but were merely added to. Aside from the vocational/technical training mentioned above, community colleges became increasingly invested in staying in touch with their local communities and providing the educational services deemed necessary. In keeping with this spirit of responsiveness, they also espoused the idea of admitting a wide range of students, in terms of race, socioeconomic status, and academic ability. In response to

the latter, community colleges began to offer remedial education programs to meet the needs of their communities. In the 1960's, officially ensuring that community colleges' clientele would retain its challenging mix, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education encouraged all two year colleges to admit any high school graduate or "otherwise qualified" person, calling for, in effect, an open door admission policy (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

Growth and Diversification of Faculty and Staff

Diener (1994) muses, "A movement in American education has been *from* the notion of college-as-fortress *to* one of college-as-service-provider" (p.8). Community colleges are definitely an example of such a shift in focus, and the configuration of their faculty and staff somewhat reflects this change. While faculty remained in traditional arts and sciences areas established at the time of the first junior colleges, additional instructional personnel were also added as time went on to teach in vocational/technical areas, and other subject areas deemed necessary by the surrounding community. These people were often also called faculty.

Since guidance and counseling are key functions in institutions sometimes viewed as transitional or "point of entry," the number and typology of student services personnel in community colleges has also increased over the years. The remedial/developmental education function that went hand in hand with opening the doors of access wider also meant an increase of academic support personnel, many of whom were specially trained, but who were not faculty. In addition, as the community colleges continued to evolve and grow, non-faculty, professional staff were added in the areas of health services, disability services, career counseling, student activities, college development,

institutional research, human resources, enrollment management, and other areas (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Diener, 1994; O'Banion, 1989).

The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) notes that, between 1976 and 1993, the percentage of "non-faculty professionals" in higher education institutions (all types) in the U.S. has increased from 10% to 15.9% (p. 235). Statistical indicators of increases in numbers of professional staff specifically at two-year colleges are difficult to pin down. UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute information (Sax et al., 1996) is not much more illustrative than that of NCES, since it focuses solely on faculty and not other employee groups. Johnsrud and Rosser (1999a) categorize these non-faculty professionals as "mid-level administrators" and assert that they comprise "the largest growth area in the college and university system" (p. 122).

While some might see this growth as an appropriate response to shifting enrollment trends and government- or community-mandated programming initiatives, critics argue that increases in numbers of non-teaching staff members are indicative of a "bureaucratic bloat" in American higher education that can best be remedied by putting the system on a fat-trimming diet (Grassmuck, 1990 & 1991). What such statistics do not show is the nature and the quality of the work carried out by these professionals; although grouped under one broad category usually termed "administrative," it is likely that many of these professionals are in direct service roles which meet a variety of key student and institutional needs.

Organizational Models

In this section, I present four organizational models in an attempt to understand the way that community colleges operate today, particularly in relation to their faculty and staff. The questions which inform this section include:

- How did the bureaucratic model, in use by emerging universities at the turn of the century, carry over into the emerging junior colleges?
- In what way has the community college functioned as a collegium, and what does this mean for faculty and staff?
- What aspects of the cultural model might help us understand the workplace experiences of master's level professional staff?
- In what ways are community colleges political systems, and how might various groups secure power in such systems?
- How is decision making conceptualized in each of the four models, and what ramifications might this have for master's level professional staff in community colleges?

Bureaucratic Model

The large research universities that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century followed the example set by their "benchmark" institution, Johns Hopkins University, and were faculty-centered institutions. Specialization in a field was required in order to be an expert, and this also resulted in departmentalization of faculty and the proliferation of more complex organizational structures. This meant that a university president alone would not be capable of managing such an enterprise. Thus, the bureaucratic structure which characterizes many of today's higher education

institutions was developed, with administrative layers between faculty and presidents. Veysey (1973), for one, marvels at the uniformity in structure assumed by higher education institutions within a relatively short period of time, including organization into departments and the establishment of chains of command. Veysey posits that growth along these lines paralleled that of organizational development in industry at the time, which was grounded heavily in what Max Weber (1947) termed "rational" assumptions.

Since the early junior colleges were usually viewed as parcels or progeny of four year institutions, it would only follow that they, too, would adopt the multilevel, hierarchical structure of the universities they sought to emulate. Another key characteristic of bureaucracies carried over into the early junior colleges was an emphasis on division of labor, the essential link between the structure of an organization and its goals.

Mintzberg (1979) ties structure to function by depicting organizations as having an operating core, which provides the main service of the organization to its customers, and an administrative component, featuring middle line managers and those at the strategic apex, or top, of the organization. In addition, the technostructure and support staff provide oversight and support functions for the work of the operating and administrative areas. Such a description aptly describes many present-day community colleges as well. While the "core technology" is seen as delivery of instruction, there are many people (e.g., support services personnel, program specialists, and career counselors) who function in administrative or support roles to ensure that this happens. Of the five types of bureaucracies described by Mintzberg (1979), one in particular seems to best represent the bureaucracy as manifest in higher education: the "professional

bureaucracy." This type of bureaucracy is characterized by a flat structure with decentralized control and, among other things, considerable autonomy in the work of those at the operating core. Indeed, instructional faculty at the operating core in community colleges function with a high degree of autonomy, often more than that exhibited by personnel in support roles.

Collegial Model

At the same time, however, many community colleges exhibit qualities of a collegial organizational model, which has been in use in American higher education longer than the bureaucratic one. The idea of the college as a collegial organization is based on the English college model, imported to this continent with the founding of the colonial colleges. In this model, faculty have a say in governing their own affairs and are considered equal members who participate in decision making (Birnbaum, 1988). It was not until the rise of the research university that the bureaucratic and collegial models began to vie for primacy as the overlying template of institutional organization. However structured and hierarchical colleges became (including the emerging junior and community colleges), they were still considered faculty-centered institutions, and collegiality has been important to one extent or another. According to Weber (1947):

> A bureaucratic organization may be limited and indeed must be by agencies which act on their own authority alongside the bureaucratic hierarchy... It is possible for any type of authority to be deprived of its monocratic character, which binds it to a single person, by the principle of collegiality. (p. 392)

Several characteristics of a collegium are often present in community colleges. Birnbaum (1988) and Perkins (1973) have used the term "democratic" to describe collegial organizations, meaning that authority cannot be vested in a few people at the top

of the organization, but must be shared by all members (at least faculty and administrators) as equals. Birnbaum has likewise stressed the importance of "loops of interaction" among members of a collegium, whereby they "interact and influence each other through a network of continuous personal exchanges based on social attraction, value consensus, and reciprocity" (1988, p. 94). The emphasis on consensus and full participation in decision making is taken seriously in a collegium (Baldridge et al., 1977) and leaders are chosen by their peers and considered "first among equals."

Although Baldridge and colleagues (1977) refer to the collegium as "a Utopian prescription for operating the educational system," they also acknowledge that the model is more *normative*, a description of things as they ought to be, rather than *descriptive*, a depiction of things as they really are (p. 37). Henkin and Persson (1992) surveyed faculty at three universities regarding their attitudes toward participation in governance by non-academic staff at their institutions. In general, they found faculty receptive to staff participation in governance processes in matters related to financial, personal, and institutional affairs, and to a small extent in student affairs. In matters pertaining to academic affairs, however, faculty were extremely resistant to the idea of even professional and scientific staff involvement in governance. The authors concluded that while a true collegial system would call for equal participation of all members, "in our less than perfect system, deterrents to participation in governance abound" (p. 61).

Cultural Model

In many ways, community colleges can also be thought of as cultures. Perhaps the most apt definition of a culture as applied to a higher education setting has been stated by Kuh and Whitt (1988):

> the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions which guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institution of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus. (p. 12-13)

Indeed, persons working at a community college do often share a set of beliefs and values, and may also revere their organizational saga (Burton, 1980), the story of their institution's founding, especially if there are still members around who were part of it. In addition, Morgan (1986) notes that corporate culture includes the use of rituals, symbols, heroes, and shared ideology or mission, and develops during the course of social interaction. These are characteristics which can also be identified in community colleges.

It is the notion of subcultures within a culture, however, that may have some bearing on understanding master's prepared professionals' experiences in community colleges. Kuh and Whitt (1988) posit that higher education faculty in general share a common culture which values "the pursuit of learning, academic freedom, and collegiality" (p.76), but McGrath and Spear (1994) characterize the culture of community college faculty in particular as a "practitioners' culture," wherein "the initiatory process of disengagement from disciplines, and reengagement through classroom practice, create a peculiar, but still recognizable, form of professional culture" (p. 362). As negative and elitist as such a characterization sounds, one wonders if community college faculty might have closer ties to the practitioners' culture and the culture of their own institutions, rather than to a broader "culture" of faculty at other institutions working in the same discipline. Kuh and Whitt also explore the idea of whether subcultures exist among faculty, perhaps along disciplinary, racial, gender, or full-time/part-time status lines. They cite Van Maanen and Barley's (1985) key criteria for a subculture, including

"regular interaction, group self-consciousness, shared problems, and action based on collective understandings" (Kuh & Whitt, p. 82), among others, and conclude that whether a subgroup of faculty is identified as a subculture depends on how one defines the term.

What about groups who are not faculty? If Van Maanen and Barley's definition is kept in mind, would master's prepared professional staff be considered a subculture of the broader community college culture? This might depend on what opportunities they have for interaction and development of a group identity. Or do they identify more broadly with the field in which they work, the broader profession, such as academic support, disability access, counseling, student services, institutional research, and so on? Gawreluck (1993) studied the organizational culture of one community college, and identified two subcultures which existed in addition to (and sometimes at odds with) the dominant administrative culture: the faculty and the non-academic support staff. He found that the non-academic support staff took pride in their work and saw it as important to the college, although they sometimes felt like "second class citizens" and did not feel the college returned their loyalty. Such concepts are worthy of exploration. If professional staff can be identified as a subculture, what does this mean in terms of the subculture's relationship to the majority culture, and how might this impact their feelings of membership and empowerment in the larger organization?

Political Model

The notion of empowerment brings to mind the fourth organizational model, the political model, which may have some bearing on the way community colleges operate. As much as community colleges exhibit many characteristics of cultures, there sometimes

appears to be more that divides them and causes conflict than that which binds members together. As Birnbaum (1988) notes when describing a fictional large higher education institution, "[D]evelopment of a pervasive or coherent culture is inhibited by the various and competing interests of different groups" (p. 133). Characteristics which make community colleges political entities include varying degrees of participation by members in decision making, regular conflict, the formulation of coalitions of people with common purposes and interests, and the use of authority and power to achieve one's desired ends (Baldridge et al., 1977; Morgan, 1986).

Both Bolman and Deal (1991) and Morgan (1986) offer their ideas regarding forms of or sources of power in an organization. Bolman and Deal cite eight, while Morgan lists fourteen. It is interesting to note that, while master's level professional staff in a community college may not have formal authority as deemed by the bureaucratic structure of the prevailing system of shared governance and are sometimes not included in decision making, they might indeed have other types of power, depending on the type of work they do and with whom they interact. The list below borrows from the work of both authors, and indicates sources of power that non-faculty professionals could have access to:

- Control of Scarce Resources
- Use of Organizational Structure, Rules, and Regulations
- Knowledge, Information, and Expertise
- Ability to Cope with Uncertainty
- Control of Technology

- Interpersonal Alliances, Networks, and Control of "Informal Organization"
- Control of Counterorganizations
- Personal Power (based on personality or talents)

(Adapted from Bolman & Deal, 1991, pp. 196-197; Morgan, 1986, p. 159)

The political model provides an interesting framework by which provocative questions can be raised regarding the lives of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges. If in some ways they are part of a political system, where do they feel a sense of power in their daily work? In what types of decisions are they included? Are they occasionally able to display power by controlling information, resources, or technology? What types of networks or alliances are they involved in within and outside of their institutions, and how do these connections promote a sense of personal and professional power? If they are involved in a "counterorganization," such as a union, how does this affect their relationship with other employee groups within their colleges?

It may well be that a community college is a cross between what Morgan (1986) terms a "direct democracy," a system in which all members have a right to rule, and a "technocracy," a system in which rule is "exercised through use of knowledge, expert power, and the ability to solve problems" (p. 145). The reality is, as noted previously in discussion of the collegial model, that many times only faculty and administrators (and not staff) are involved in decision making (Henkin & Persson, 1992), yet at the same time, community colleges indicate that they place some premium on specialized expertise, since they hire well-educated individuals in both faculty and non-faculty roles. Does this paradox place master's prepared professional staff in an ambiguous position?

Decision Making

Each organizational model differs in its approach to decision making. For example, according to Birnbaum (1988), "the core of bureaucratic management is seen to be decision making" (p. 124). Decisions in bureaucratic institutions are usually top-down and are considered to be rationally connected to the goals of the organization. In contrast, collegial decision making involves full participation of members of the academy (at least those persons deemed to be "members" in the first place), and is egalitarian rather than hierarchical (Birnbaum, 1988). Decision making in the cultural model is an interpretive process, wherein participants make decisions keeping in mind the organization's value systems and shared meanings (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Tierney, 1988). Finally, in the political model, decisions are said to be forged through conflict and negotiation, and power, either individual or collective (via coalitions), is important (Baldridge et al., 1977).

Of course, each community college is unique and its approach to decision making is likely to include elements of more than one model. Regardless of the configuration of models used, a few key questions can be raised. First, who are the participants in decision making? Those in a bureaucracy would say "those at the top in a decision making role." In a collegium, participation in decision making is supposedly a shared responsibility and privilege, but who actually is part of the "community?" If one's institution is seen to be a culture, the emphasis seems not to be on who, but on how the culture will be preserved, although it is likely that the culture also determines who participates in decisions. In institutions with a more political bent, those making the

decisions are usually those with power in one form or another. Who has power in community colleges? How do they get it?

Bess (1988) includes the "who" question in his consideration of what he terms the "setting" in which a decision is made. He posits that settings for making decisions vary in three important ways: in the numbers of people participating, in the employee classification of those involved, and in the "formal vs. informal nature" of the decision (p. 115).

The second question is, what types of decisions are made? Bess (1988) also provides a typology of "decision domains in higher education," categorized as follows:

- Inputs of Resources (e.g., money or personnel) which enable institutions to do their work.
- Inputs of Raw Materials (e.g., students, knowledge) which the institution will act upon in some way.
- Transformation of Raw Material (e.g., the processes by which students will be taught and knowledge will be generated).
- Quality of Outputs (e.g., publications, graduates).
- Design of feedback information systems (e.g., evaluation/assessment activities). (p. 19)

Bess's theory might have some application to the professionals interviewed for this study. Do the extent and types of decision making in which stakeholders are involved reflect their feelings of full membership in and value to their institutions? Conversely, what messages are sent if certain individuals are not allowed to be involved

in any decision making of consequence? Questions of this variety certainly merit consideration in a study of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges.

Literature on Faculty and Staff

A search of the relevant literature pertaining to community college staff indeed became a search for such literature. Just as a therapist might say that what is left untold is as diagnostic as that which is told, so too is the case in this aspect of the literature review. What exists, in manifold form—namely research on faculty work—is abundant, although only a small portion of this pertains to community college faculty. The part that is "diagnostic" is that such little research exists on those who are not faculty, those who work as staff at higher education institutions. When the search is narrowed to community colleges only and to a more narrow definition of staff (master's-prepared professionals only), then the paucity of findings indeed tells us something.

Even books regarded as textbook-type volumes in the field of community colleges, such as Cohen and Brauer's The American Community College (1996) and Managing Community Colleges (1994), O'Banion's Innovation in the Community College (1989), and a New Directions for Community Colleges volume, Issues in Personnel Management (Miller & Holzapfel, 1988), give scant mention to persons present on the campus other than faculty, students, and administrators. In Miller's 1988 edited volume, Evaluating Major Components of Two-Year Colleges, there are chapters related to evaluation of students, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and administrators. Apparently staff, or staff-faculty relations, are not considered a "major component." If time and energy spent on research about a particular group are any indication of the value

placed on that group, what might this indicate about the perceived value and place of non-faculty in higher education, and in community colleges in particular? What could be found needed to be sorted a bit, particularly as it pertained to the following questions:

- What has been researched regarding the work and role of the faculty in higher education institutions? In community colleges specifically?
- What existing studies pertain to community college staff, and how is "staff" defined in each?
- Where do research gaps exist?

The Work and Role of Faculty

Numerous books and articles exist which detail the work and role of faculty in higher education institutions. Some are based on large-scale surveys (Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Ladd & Lipset, 1975; Sax, Astin, Arrendondo, & Korn, 1996; Willie & Stecklein, 1982), while others are based on qualitative research, such as interviews or ethnographic studies (chapters in Clark, 1987; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; London, 1978; Seidman, 1985). A great number of these pieces deal primarily with the lives of faculty in four-year institutions rather than those at community colleges.

Describing faculty work. In terms of providing an overview of the work life of higher education faculty, books and articles abound. Some notable examples include Ladd and Lipset's (1975) The Divided Academy, which analyzed the responses of 60,000 faculty to the 1969 Carnegie Commission's Survey of Student and Faculty Opinion, especially to identify trends in their political orientation and specific political aspects of their academic lives. Fifty-seven of the three-hundred-and-three schools chosen for the study were two-year institutions. Some years later, in Clark's (1987) The Academic

Life, the author utilized a combination of survey data (including the Carnegie survey) and qualitative interview data to develop a compelling depiction of the lives of faculty in colleges and universities. For his discussion of various dimensions of academic professionalism, Clark led a study in which over 200 interviews were conducted with faculty members at sixteen institutions, three of which were community colleges. The data were sorted into several theme areas, including cultural issues, authority, career path, and professional association.

Willie and Stecklein (1982) literally "took the long view" in their comparison of faculty attributes and opinions over three decades, by analyzing survey results for Minnesota higher education faculty for 1956, 1968, and 1980. The surveys focused on demographic characteristics, career path information, professionalism, and career satisfaction issues. While the researchers found little change in the average demographic profile of faculty during this period, they did note that the level of education among faculty increased sharply. In terms of career satisfaction, Willie and Stecklein found that the college teachers were generally satisfied with their careers, though a higher percentage in the last survey indicated uncertainty or negativity when asked if they would pursue the same career path again, given another chance.

Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster (1998) used a subset of data from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-93) in order to develop a profile of what they call "the new academic generation." For the cohort of full-time faculty participating in NSOPF-93 who were in the first seven years of their acadmic careers, the data were presented and analyzed along four dimensions: demographic and background charateristics, career characteristics, current work characteristics, and attitudes and

values. Although the main purpose of the book was to describe this new faculty cohort, comparisons were made between them and a group of senior faculty, for the purpose of illustrating how the new academic generation differs from its forbears. New-generation community college faculty were included in the cohort studied; in fact, new faculty at public two-year institutions made up 19.3% of the sample studied (p. 21).

The works mentioned so far may or may not have included community college faculty as part of a larger aggregate. The most notable recent study on community college faculty *only* was conducted by Earl Seidman, and is described in his book In the Words of Faculty (1985). Seidman used in-depth phenomenological interviewing to understand the experiences of 76 community college faculty, and then presented the data and his interpretations of it using two separate frameworks: one organized according to common themes he found in the data, and another organized according to academic discipline. He concluded his book with several recommendations for ways the findings could be utilized to improve teaching and support faculty in community colleges.

Morale and job satisfaction. Researchers have also been curious about what makes for good faculty morale and job satisfaction. For example, the issue of faculty morale is explored by Rice and Austin (1991), who studied faculty morale in ten small liberal arts institutions which they had previously identified as having high faculty morale. They sought to identify organizational features that were associated with high morale, and conducted a multi-case study, which included site visits to the ten institutions. These exemplary institutions were found to exhibit the following four characteristics: distinctive organizational cultures, strong, participatory leadership, a

sense of organizational momentum, and compelling identification with the institution on the part of the faculty (pp. 208-209).

Faculty morale and job satisfaction have been studied specifically among community college faculty. Hill (1983) used a survey to look specifically at job satisfaction among community college faculty in Pennsylvania, and refuted earlier notions of high levels of satisfaction in this group, noting that faculty differed considerably on various dimensions of job satisfaction. Interestingly, Hill discovered that increased involvement in providing service to students and student groups adversely affected job satisfaction, while (not surprisingly) faculty who had high levels of involvement in research and writing experienced lower levels of job satisfaction in the community college, with its emphasis on a teaching mission. A brief paper by Halford (1994) provides a single case study of one community college and how its new president enhanced faculty morale by working from a paradigm of "faculty professional self-esteem." He began with their most basic, concrete need—an effective physical plant in which to work—and gave it top priority, demonstrating that the faculty's basic needs were important to the administration and thereby gaining their trust.

Cassara (1983) took an intervention approach to study job satisfaction, designing a stress management program for community college faculty and staff which focused on shifting each individual's perceived locus of control to an internal one. After being pretested with stress profiles and a locus of control scale, participants attended a series of workshops developed by the author. Post-tests were given to each participant, and interviews were conducted several weeks later. Cassara found that participants employed strategies learned in the workshop, much to their benefit, and recommended that

"personal development programs in the context of faculty and staff development" (p. 134) be utilized more widely in community colleges.

Faculty development. The issue of professional development of community college faculty has been addressed to some extent in the literature. As an example, Hoerner, Clowes, Lichtman, and Allkins (1991) conducted a large-scale survey to help identify community colleges which offered professional development opportunities for their occupational-technical faculty. Out of hundreds of institutions which provided such opportunities, sixteen could be described as exemplary in their practices, and six of these were chosen for a multi-case study. Administrators and faculty at these six institutions were interviewed so that researchers could identify common themes related to their approaches to and philosophies of professional development. In a nutshell, Hoerner and colleagues found that the exemplary community colleges exhibited the following characteristics:

- Strong leadership with emphasis on growth and development.
- Caring and supportive environment for full-time faculty.
- Part-time faculty as "significant but lesser" members.
- Professional development benefiting both individual and institution.
- Individualized professional development activities.
- Limitations to professional development identified and overcome.

(adapted from p. 18)

Career path and professionalism. In addition to professional development, professionalism and career path issues are also important to the lives of community college faculty. In his study of one new community college's culture, London (1978)

devoted a chapter to the issue of career path and identity of faculty, as he analyzed observation and interview data from his year-long ethnographic study. He found that many faculty at the college he studied had been thwarted in various ways in their attempts to earn Ph.D.'s. Many of them had to manage the tension between the "autonomous" (defined by the institution itself, usually related to creation and transmission of knowledge) and "popular" (responding to the demands of the occupational structure) functions of their jobs (p. 49).

In a more recent study, Rifkin (1998) applied occupational and individual dimensions of professionalism to her analysis of existing and new survey data, and found that community college faculty exhibit high degrees of occupational and individual professionalism. Once she separated out data from full-time and part-time faculty, however, she found distinctions between the two groups; in general, the part-timers' scores on various dimensions tended to lower the overall professionalism scores when combined with the full-timers' data.

Part-time faculty. Any discussion of community college faculty research would not be complete without mention of other studies related to Rifkin's topic, namely, studies of part-time faculty. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 1996), 60 percent of faculty in community colleges are part-time. Gappa and Leslie (1993) conducted an extensive study of part-time higher education faculty, including some community college faculty. (The eighteen institutions represented in their study included five community colleges). After site visits to all of the institutions, and interviews with 240 part-time faculty and over 200 other personnel such as administrators and department chairs, the authors present a richly detailed picture of

the work of part-time faculty, organized according to topics such as employment profiles, money, external forces, and participation in the academic community. They then look to the future and make several recommendations aimed at optimizing the utilization of part-time faculty and enhancing their status and working conditions.

A few years later, Roueche, Roueche, and Milliron (1995) sought not only to describe the work of part-time faculty, but to propose models that administrators might use to integrate them into the organizational cultures of their institutions. In 1996, the same authors conducted a qualitative study of community colleges which had been identified as institutions doing an exceptional job of utilizing part-time faculty. They then conducted site visits to find out just what the schools were doing, and applied their "integration strategies" model to the data. While they found many innovative practices in place and "pockets of excellence" (p. 40), they were somewhat disturbed to find that few institutions (even among the exemplary ones chosen for the study) actually had a college-wide, organized system for integrating part-time faculty. They concluded the article by making several recommendations for administrators.

Learning from faculty studies. The preceding subsection on faculty studies, while it may seem to have veered away from the topic of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges, helps to illustrate two important points. First, the summary provided represents only a small portion of the research that has been conducted on faculty, including community college faculty. Second, most of the concerns, such as morale, job satisfaction, professionalism, and integration into one's institution are also concerns of non-faculty professional staff in community colleges, and hence, merit further investigation in studies of this group.

Studies on Staff

Not unlike the aforementioned studies on faculty, existing research on staff in the higher education literature includes studies of this group in community colleges and at four-year institutions. In addition, there is the tricky issue of the use of the word "staff." Any Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) or Dissertation Abstracts Online search results obtained using the word "staff" had to be carefully combed through, in order to separate out pieces which used the term "staff" to refer to all of the personnel working at an institution, not just non-faculty.

Staff development. The phenomenon of ambiguous terminology is especially apparent in the area of staff development. For example, Smith (1989) discussed "innovations in staff development" in a chapter which considered staff development programs in community colleges. Another study which seemed to use a more all-inclusive definition of staff development was conducted by Rosenberger (1991) in her investigation of staff development in the Florida community college system. Comstock (1982) tackled the issue of staff development in community colleges in an even broader, more theoretical way in her comparison study of staff development practitioners' and experts' concepts of ideal staff development practice. Her focus was more on this comparison than on clarifying or defining which "staff" were included in staff development.

Research which focuses specifically on "staff" (and not faculty) and the issue of staff development ranges from assessment of the state of staff development programs at one or more institutions, to research on staff development for specific employee groups. In regard to the former, Marciano and Kello (1990) compiled survey data from 87 two-

and four-year institutions in North Carolina to ascertain the state of staff development programs throughout the state. Their areas of inquiry included types of training offered, location of training, trainers used, and budgetary issues. Harvey (1985) described the work of a task force at SUNY-Stonybrook, which first studied the state of staff promotion policies at other state higher education institutions, then surveyed non-teaching professional staff at its own school, in order to develop a plan for staff development and advancement at SUNY-Stonybrook. In the latter category, staff development studies on specific employee groups include Barnes (1981), who described staff development programming for student services personnel at Michigan Community Colleges, and Kuceyeski (1995), who collected data from community college staff developers and office support staff to determine the state of staff development practices for office support staff.

Climate and morale issues. Literature in this area generally falls into two groups: organizational climate and morale studies which include staff as study participants, and research studies or position papers which present specific data or propose practices.

In the first group are several studies of organizational climate or employee morale, in which care was taken to ensure that staff were included, in addition to the faculty and administrators studied. The previously mentioned stress management intervention study conducted by Cassara (1983) had the goal of increasing job satisfaction for faculty and professional staff. Another example of such inclusion is Welhaven's (1996) study of attitudes toward change and integration at four higher education institutions in Minnesota. (Here, "integration" referred to state-mandated integration of the four institutions in the study.) Welhaven included faculty, staff, and

administrators as participants in her study, and found (among other things) that the three employee groups differed in their attitudes toward change, integration, and the impact of integration. McReynolds (1995) also included staff in his study of the organizational climate at one Virginia community college, using existing college climate and work environment assessment measures. A study conducted by Lanning (1982) sought to document the perceptions of three employee groups—classified staff, non-management, and management—on issues of morale and preferred management styles.

Other researchers have gone beyond simply including staff in their examination of climate or morale; they have focused specifically on the staff. One such study was conducted by Takahata and Armstrong (1996), who used a survey to assess campus climate from the point of view of classified staff in the San Diego Community College District. The findings generally indicated that staff felt positive about the climate at work, and that the climate was also fairly positive for racial and ethnic diversity and equitable treatment based on gender, disability status, or sexual orientation. Some rude treatment of classified staff by faculty, administrators, students, or other staff was noted, however. A similar study was conducted by Hageseth and Atkins (1989), who interviewed eighty-one staff employees at a four-year institution in order to learn about their work lives, personal needs, and opinions. The authors then presented their findings two ways: according to a wellness framework, and according to two major themes that emerged, diversity and feeling valued.

Kline, Parsons, Gibson, Ogden, and Lim (1991) scaled down their focus, by comparison, when they conducted a study of staff members in two units in a registrar's office at a higher education institution. In order to assess the staff's job satisfaction, the

researchers administered a series of questionnaires to thirteen staff members, including those related to work environment, motivational culture, and workplace satisfaction. In addition to learning a great deal about the employees' perceptions, the authors also learned that analysis of job satisfaction and workplace climate is best done by small units, so that specific problems can be identified and rectified.

Johnsrud and Rosser (1999a) looked at the morale of "midlevel administrators" at ten higher education institutions in Hawaii, including seven community colleges. They defined this group as "those employees classified as administrative, professional, and technical staff members" (p. 126). A total of 869 survey respondents offered feedback on the impact of various demographic, structural, and perceptual issues on their individual morale. Overall, perceptual factors were found to have the most significant relationship with morale; examples of such included perceptions of being recognized for one's competence, perceptions of trust from supervisors, perceptions of discrimination, and perceptions of mobility. The authors offer a few suggestions for how institutional structures and processes can be improved in order to alter these perceptions and thus, the morale of professional staff.

Castleman and Allen (1995) investigated the situation of female "general staff" (defined as "clerical, administrative, and administrative support," p. 65) in ten Australian universities. First, they analyzed payroll data from the ten institutions participating in the study, and then they interviewed fifty department heads who had general staff employed in their units in order to learn more about the experiences of these employees. While the authors did offer several suggestions for improving both the work climate and employees' opportunities for advancement, the authors failed to gather data directly from general

staff members themselves. It seems ironic that, in a study which had the indirect goal of gaining recognition and empowerment for an underappreciated group, no one asked the group members themselves what life at the university was like.

Decision making. Christian (1980) committed the same error in his study of classified staff decision making in community colleges. Christian analyzed survey data from 82 presidents and chief personnel officers of Texas community colleges (the exact number of institutions was not stated) in an attempt to assess the current and ideal amounts of classified staff involvement in decision making, classified staff's satisfaction with participation in decision making, their preferences regarding who should represent classified staff to the governing board, and other issues. The author presented and analyzed the data using 71 tables, and concluded that classified staff were generally dissatisfied with their involvement in decision making and that "the classified staff employees' input has a low priority in the area of decision making" (p. 187). To his credit, at the end of his report Christian recognized the need for direct staff input in his research, recommending that "Future research studies should be conducted with the classified staff employees as the population" (p. 192).

Efforts targeting staff. There have been authors who have focused specifically on higher education staff in a constructive way, with positive results. Wallace (1995) outlines a program instituted at Kennesaw State College, which sought to improve the leadership skills of the college's staff employees, and address some of their concerns at the same time. A "staff leadership" group was convened, which had a hand in developing leadership training programs for staff, sponsoring a fund-raising event, conducting an employee attitudinal survey and, in a recent cohort, developing an

orientation program for new staff members. Wallace emphasized the value of such programs, especially those designed with heavy staff input, in integrating and retaining new staff employees. In a similar vein, Small and Wulf (1981) described practices instituted in the University System of New Hampshire and the University of Iowa to develop human resources plans and policies specifically for professional staff.

In a more general, prescriptive way, Deal (1994) likewise stressed the idea of listening to and valuing staff employees. Referring to staff as "behind-the-scenes employees" (p. iii), Deal encouraged higher education personnel administrators to pay attention to and empower the staff at their institutions, through a number of principles, including, "[Tying] work to the mission" (p. v), "Solicit[ing] ideas" (p. vi), and "Provid[ing] the top tools" (p. vii).

Staff and faculty. As much as the work of Deal (1994) and others strives mightily to connect higher education staff to the mission of their institutions and to integrate them better into the employee pool, differences between staff and faculty do exist, and at least two authors have acknowledged this in the literature, albeit in disparate ways. Looker (1993), for example, compared employment records, survey data, and interview data from "academic and nonacademic" (read faculty and non-faculty) women and men at one university in Canada, and concluded that "both women and men faculty have several advantages over their non-academic co-workers. Within each category, however, women are consistently disadvantaged relative to men" (p. 21). Looker found several key advantages for faculty, including more generous and more flexible terms of employment, longer and more flexible leave time for illness, bereavement, or paternity/adoption, and better access to information and power. The gender overlay became most apparent when

Looker considered the fact that, among faculty, women were concentrated in the lower ranks, and among non-academic staff, the same held sway (with heavy concentrations in clerical-secretarial work). The author described women in staff positions as being "doubly disadvantaged" (p. 40), and urged changes in the policies and reward structures at the university, with the goal of gender equity in mind.

Bess (1982) took a different tack when analyzing the differences between faculty and staff. Specifically, Bess focused on the issue of faculty status and how it influenced faculty interaction with staff. Bess then used various theories from organizational development and organizational psychology literature to clarify the organizational context in which faculty and staff coexist, and proposed reasons for the "asymmetrical" ways in which they related to one another. From his perspective, the unique organizational features of colleges and universities accord faculty status of a sort, but not a great deal of accompanying power; as such, this promotes ambiguity in their relations with lower status employees. Hence (and also related to what Bess feels is a lack of interpersonal skills on the part of faculty), faculty interactions are rife with disingenuousness and ingratiation (p. 116).

Community college culture. While Bess offers some provocative theory, some readers might long for a few stories or some descriptive material which would bring his ideas to life. If any type of research can breathe life into theory (and develop theories of its own), ethnographic research certainly can. The year-long ethnographic study conducted by London (1978), which was mentioned earlier under "faculty studies," was an early foray into the idea of not only viewing a community college as a culture, but studying it as one. He provided thick descriptions of faculty and students in a community

college, including teachers' career paths and students' aspirations, setting it forth in a context of "tension management" (p. 59) between the socioeconomic class of teachers and that of students, and between the intellectual tasks expected of students and the vocational training many of them desired. London did not focus much on community college administrators or staff in his research.

Two other ethnographic studies of community colleges, however, have considered staff in their investigations of institutional culture. Fish (1988), for example, studied the culture of one upstate community college in the state of New York, which she bolstered by also looking briefly at four other community colleges in the state. Fish devoted a chapter of her analysis to faculty and *staff* (italics mine), although the profiles and commentary included were weighted more toward teaching faculty and administrators. She found that, by and large, faculty and staff were dedicated to the community college concept and did not see their work as simply a stepping stone to a university job; they were generally student-centered and took pleasure in the challenge and variety presented by the diverse student body.

Gawreluck (1993) also studied the culture of one community college, this one in Canada. One of the most interesting observations made by Gawreluck was the existence of a dominant managerial culture at the institution, and two distinct subcultures—one of faculty, and one of non-academic support staff. The non-academic support staff subculture members generally felt their work was important to the college's mission, but that it was sometimes underappreciated. They valued loyalty to the institution (which was not always repaid, they felt), teamwork, and collegiality. Gawreluck likewise suggested that "third level subcultures" (p. 194) were present at the college, residing in

specific departments or units which not only had values or beliefs consonant with the dominant culture or a subculture, but also had sets of "unique localized values of their specific world" (p. 195), depending on the nature of their work and professional affiliation.

Gaps in Research

While researchers who have focused on staff issues are to be commended for their efforts to acknowledge and document the work of higher education employees who are neither administration nor faculty, the disparity between the two groups in sheer volume of research is overwhelming, and much different than the employees' actual representation in higher education institutions in the United States. The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) reported that in Fall, 1993, higher education employees in the categories of "non-faculty professionals" (15.9%) and "nonprofessional staff" (34.2%) together comprised 50.1% of all employees, while faculty made up 35.9% (p. 235). Accordingly, Freeman and Roney (1978) refer to the lack of research on staff as "the neglected majority" (p. 21).

The numerous faculty studies in existence provide an idea of what *can* be done, and the above staff studies (or studies including staff, at least) describe what *has* been done. When the focus is narrowed to the particular staff group of master's prepared professional staff, and still further to those working in community colleges, research gaps become even more apparent. The question remains: what research has been conducted specifically with master's-prepared staff in community colleges as its object or focus of study? My review of the literature suggests no such research exists. Clearly, there is a

need for research which documents the existence of and experiences of these professionals.

Related Literature on Authority, Marginality, and Equity

Select strands of the social psychology and organizational development literature must be examined when seeking to understand the experiences of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges. Specifically the focused topics of authority, marginality, and equity merit consideration. These ideas are explored in the following section, and the following queries answered:

- How might theory on administrative versus professional authority relate to life in the community college?
- What is the concept of marginality and how might it relate to the study?
- How might equity theory explain the ways that people deal with situations which they perceive to be unfair?

Much of the literature cited in this section was not written with the community college, or even the higher education, setting in mind. That said, these ideas may provide a conceptual framework by which some of the findings of this study may be interpreted.

Administrative versus Professional Authority

The concepts of administrative versus professional authority are expounded upon by Blau (1973), Clark (1991), Etzioni (1991), and Parsons (1971), among others. These authors make a distinction between administrative or bureaucratic authority, which is based on rank and one's place in a hierarchy, and professional authority, which is based on knowledge or expertise in a given area. Etzioni (1991), in particular, describes three

types of organizations based on the way they handle knowledge: professional organizations (which are established for the purpose of producing and disseminating knowledge), service organizations, and non-professional organizations. Etzioni places colleges and universities in the first category, professional organizations, asserting that the dilemma for those who head such institutions is balancing the roles of individuals with professional authority and those with administrative authority. Each feels that he/she knows what is best for the institution, but for different reasons. Etzioni proposes a possible solution to this dilemma, the "professionally oriented administrator," who combines professional training and expertise with a "managerial personality" (p. 447). Indeed, many administrators who have risen through the ranks, beginning as a faculty member (with a subject area of expertise) might fit this description, provided they maintain their ability to see things from the faculty point-of-view while carrying out administrative duties.

Do master's prepared professionals who do not hold faculty rank in community colleges have professional authority? It seems reasonable that they should; their education level and expertise is often equivalent to that of many faculty members (and administrators) in community colleges. But if, according to Etzioni (1991), such status also means having one's expertise recognized and respected by others when it comes to conflicts with administrative authorities, this may not hold sway. In what Clark (1991) calls the "federated professionalism" (p. 457) of higher education institutions, the professional authorities therein are perhaps overly individualized and loosely connected as one body. In a community college, would master's-prepared professional staff be considered part of the federation?

If professional staff members are perceived to have lower status in their institutions, what is the nature of their interactions with faculty and administrative colleagues? In a dated but provocative study, Archibald (1976) looked at cross-class interactions and analyzed lower-status persons' responses to them, based on the perceived degree of "threat" of the interaction. Drawing heavily on Marxist theory, Archibald depicts workplace interactions between "Highs" and "Lows." While Lows may attribute more ability to Highs in workplace settings, at the same time they may not believe fully in the superiority of the Highs. Nonetheless, deference occurs, because it is sometimes the only choice, all things considered. Archibald notes, "[T]he absence of freedom of choice in such settings leads Lows to defer and conform to Highs whether or not they attribute more ability to them" (1976, p. 832). Would this also be the case for specialists, who often have professional--but not administrative--authority?

Marginality

The precarious organizational position of master's level staff in community colleges brings to mind the concept of marginality. Originally a term used in sociology to describe those who were members of two races, religions, or ethnic backgrounds, a marginal person was defined by Stonequist (1937) as "one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies, and two, not merely different, but antagonistic, cultures" (p. xv). If one accepts the ideas presented by Schoenfeld (1994), there are two distinct cultures in academe: the community of scholars culture and the corporate community, or administrative, culture (p. 29). Since master's prepared professional staff are considered neither administrators nor faculty, does this mean that they experience feelings of

marginality, in a sense? If so, how does this influence their understanding of their "place" in their institutions and the work they do?

The Concept of Equity

An additional interesting theoretical angle is provided by Carrell and Dittrich (1978) and by Chell (1985). Carrell and Dittrich have summarized what they call the "primary proposition of equity theory" thusly: "that individuals review the inputs and outcomes of themselves and others, and in situations of inequity, experience greater cognitive dissonance than individuals in equitable situations" (p. 203). Building off this idea, Chell (1985) suggests that there are several ways for dealing with inequity. The person may try to increase or decrease work output as a way of achieving a just reward one way or the other. He or she may distort perceptions of inputs and outcomes in order to reduce cognitive dissonance, or even "leave the field" in various ways, including quitting, transferring, or being absent occasionally. Another strategy, similar to the "ratebuster" idea, would be to somehow get the person perceived to be in a more rewarded position to alter outcomes or productivity, to even the score. A final strategy, Chell says, is to choose a different object of comparison, a different person to compare one's own output to, so that, although the original disparity exists, the cognitive dissonance associated with it is no longer relevant.

Equity issues may or may not occupy a place of importance in the work lives of master's level professional staff. Do these individuals experience cognitive dissonance when they compare their "inputs and outcomes" to those of faculty? If so, how do they deal with it? Especially intriguing is the final strategy listed by Chell, that of choosing a different person for personal comparison. This speaks to the issue of the professional

group, within or outside of the institution with which these professionals identify most closely. If, as Morgan (1986) suggests, "interpersonal alliances and networks" are one possible source of power in an organization, might these alliances forge a sense of power in part by offering individuals who experience inequity a different standard to which they could compare themselves and their work?

Limitations of the Literature and Warrant for the Study

In the community college, an institution which has adopted many of the forms and practices of the four-year university, master's-prepared professional staff members receive mixed messages. On the one hand, they are told that their work is valuable to the institution's overall mission of serving the community educationally (especially as that mission has evolved and expanded over the years), but on the other hand, this group is seldom studied, while the work of faculty receives a great deal of attention. In addition, depending upon which organizational model is used to view the community college, such staff members may occupy a peripheral place on an organizational chart, may experience exclusion from the collegium, may feel part of a subculture, or may need to seek alternate ways of obtaining power within the organization. The degree to which such staff are involved in decision making at their institutions was unclear to me, as were their perceptions or experiences related to authority, marginality, and equity.

There is much that is unknown about this group of professionals, including such topics as the nature of their work, professionalism and career path issues, development, their involvement in decision making, and their ties to institutional mission or culture. The review of literature presented in this chapter only serves to clarify the context in

which these professionals work, and to outline briefly studies related to faculty and staff which have helped increase understanding of what they do. Given the forces which shaped their present situation, and the panorama of research possibilities that have been explored herein, a logical next question is, "Where do I begin?" It is to this topic that I now turn.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

Words and numbers are of equal value, for, in the cloak of knowledge, one is warp and the other woof. It is no more important to count the sands than it is to name the stars. Therefore, let both kingdoms live in peace. (Juster, 1989, p. 77)

Life, especially life in hothouse colleges and universities, is not susceptible to tidy mathematics. It is complex, seldom predictable, and seething with thinly shrouded emotions. Higher education researchers need to choose between devotion to their orderly quantitative methods and a deep understanding of the messy academic world. I suggest choosing the latter. (Keller, 1998, p. 276)

Since master's prepared professional staff in community colleges have not been studied in depth before, the present study represents a way to bring attention to their work and the professional issues they face. Since the main goal of this study was to develop preliminary understandings of this understudied group, a qualitative, interview-based approach was used.

In this chapter, I provide a rationale for this choice of method and briefly discuss the philosophical framework for the study. Then I outline the research design and provide details about data collection procedures. I describe the methods of data analysis which I used in this study. Finally, I address issues of trustworthiness and ethics, as well as some potential limitations of the study.

Rationale

As indicated in the preceding chapters, the experiences and perspectives of professional staff in community colleges are set in a context in which the webs of history, organizational structure, and organizational culture are inextricably intertwined. It is because of this complexity that I felt the use of quantitative methods to study these individuals would not be appropriate. Indeed, Keller (1998) outlines several limitations of quantitative research for studying higher education issues; a key limitation is that quantitative methods can oversimplify complex human issues in an effort to be "scientific" and to operationalize and quantify human phenomena. He notes, "It is staggering to observe how dismissive or evasive higher education researchers are about the emotional side of individuals in their published research... The intensity, anxiety, and complexity of life and learning are missing in most higher education research" (p. 273). Keller encourages researchers to reject what he calls "abstracted empiricism" (p. 276) and adopt "true empiricism," which is closer to Aristotle's original meaning and which respects the experience of the senses as a source of knowledge.

In part with Keller's admonition in mind, and in light of the exploratory nature of this research, I chose to use qualitative methods to study the experiences of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges. Additionally, since I sought to develop an in-depth, textured portrait of the work lives of these individuals, and do so within the unique contexts of the different community colleges, qualitative methods seemed particularly well-suited to these ends (Creswell, 1998).

Tenets of Phenomenology

This study was phenomenological in nature; that is, its goal was to describe "the meaning and experiences of several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The concept or phenomenon at hand was the experience of being a master's-prepared professional staff member in a community college. What was "reality" for these professionals? What were the experiences that made up their daily work lives? Creswell relies on Moustakas (1994) to define what is called a "psychological approach" to phenomenology, in which one seeks, through persons' descriptions of their experiences, to determine the meaning of those experiences.

Phenomenology is rooted in an interpretivist framework and is strongly tied to the concept of achieving *Verstehen*, or a deep understanding of the topic or people one wishes to study, always from the points of view of those studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Kvale, 1996). Crowson (1993) notes:

> The researcher who is concerned with understanding seeks to observe and interpret human behavior from the observed actor's own frame of reference—developing an appreciation of the world as others experience it, and becoming acquainted with the subjective states of mind of other people. (p. 170)

Crowson also writes of the "emicist" (p. 173), who seeks to describe a culture on its (the culture's) own terms. Since the goal of the current study was to gain a beginning understanding of the target group by documenting their experiences on their own terms, it was appropriate that a phenomenological approach to inquiry be used.

Research Design

Multi-case Study

The proposed study used a multi-case design. Six master's level professionals at three different public community colleges in Illinois were studied. Miles and Huberman (1994) attest to the value of using multiple cases in a qualitative study, noting that such an approach often helps researchers to develop deeper understandings of the processes, outcomes, and relationships being studied.

Three institutions were included in this study. These institutions were chosen according to a number of purposive sampling criteria, including:

- Location of Institution: <10 miles from major city, 11-29 miles from major city, 30+ miles from major city
- Size of Institution: large (20,000+ students), medium (5,001-19,999 students), small (5,000 or less students)
- Staff Collective Bargaining Agreement: Union established and active, No union

Sampling Strategy: Selection of Interviewees

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the number fifteen as a guidepost in determining how many subjects to include in a multi-case study, though Kvale (1996) notes that "15 $\pm$ 10" is a common number of participants in current interview-based research. Basically, Kvale's advice is simple: "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (pp. 101-102). For the present study, I felt that interviewing six subjects at each of three colleges (N = 18) would enable me to collect data from a variety of professionals, but to also stop short of repetition or complete unwieldiness of data. I could obtain an enlightening glimpse into the world of

community college professional staff, provided that care was taken to a) understand their experience in depth, and b) make sure they represented a good cross-section of the target population.

Regarding the latter, certain attributes were attended to as subjects were selected for participation in the study. All subjects were master's-prepared professional staff in full-time (although not necessarily 12-month) non-faculty positions for which a master's degree may or may not have been required for entry level. One subject who had recently earned a doctoral degree, and another who was working on his doctorate, were included in the study.

Beyond the initial master's criterion, I aimed for fairly even representation across the subject pool according to the following attributes: sex, race, work categories, and length of time in position. Sampling in an even-handed manner across the above characteristics, I hoped, would strengthen the collective voice given to these professionals by ensuring that it was not simply the voice of not only one sex, race, or disciplinary category of employee. In addition, by including persons with different years of experience on the job I sought to provide perspectives shared by persons with all levels of experience, as well as offer some preliminary insights into the progression of the professional identity of this group over time. Tables 1 to 4 denote the actual distribution of study participants across various sampling criteria.

Table 1. Sex Distribution of Study Participants

Male	Female
8	10

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity of Study Participants

Majority Status	Minority Status
16	2

Table 3. Work Categories of Study Participants

Staff Category	Number of Interviewees
Student Affairs	5
Campus/Community Relations	3
Academic Department Staff	3
Instructional Support	2
Specific Student Populations	5

Table 4. Interviewees' Length of Time in Position

0-4 Years	5-9 Years	10+ Years
6	6	6

As the preceding tables indicate, my subject distribution was not quite perfect, for a few reasons. First, there was a slight imbalance between male participants (eight) and female participants (ten). When I received a potential participants list from each institution, I tried to choose three male and three female subjects, with an eye toward achieving balance in terms of type of work and time in position. At one institution, to get proper balance in these other categories, I chose to interview two male and four female specialists.

Second, the area of race, or majority/minority status, proved to be an even bigger challenge. Unfortunately, minorities were not well-represented among master's-prepared professional staff at the three community colleges included in this study; hence, only two out of the eighteen interviewees were minority group members. One college president indicated that this was something they were working on at his institution, especially since their student body was quite diverse.

Despite the above limitations, a broadly representative array of master's prepared professional staff participated in this study. Every person who was my "first tier" choice of interviewee consented to be interviewed, and many expressed positive feelings of anticipation at having an opportunity to talk about their work and their lives at their colleges.

Data Collection

Gaining Access to Institutions

Once I had targeted three community colleges which I wished to include as case sites for this study, I sent a letter to the president of each institution, requesting his/her approval for the college's participation in the study. A brief four-page executive summary of the proposed study was attached (see Appendix A). In the letter, I asked the president to identify a contact person at the college (perhaps someone from Institutional Research or Human Resources) who might act as my liaison/"gatekeeper" (Creswell, 1998, p. 117). The duties of this person included identifying potential interviewees who met the established criteria and furnishing me with institutional documents on the target population.

In follow-up phone calls or e-mails with each college, I fielded questions posed to me by the president or another individual, and reiterated the utility, importance, target population, and confidentiality of my study. In some cases, the types of questions or concerns they raised served to further pique my interest in talking with this employee group. An administrator at one college asked if I planned to get these individuals "stirred up." A contact person at the institution whose employees had recently considered unionizing told me in an e-mail that there was some concern about the types of questions I would be asking. Once permission had been granted for participation in the study, I obtained a letter indicating such from the president or his/her designee, to document the agreement and the institution's understanding of the parameters of the study.

A liaison at each institution worked with me to clarify subject selection criteria and to provide me with a list of potential interviewees. As a way of adding an extra layer

of anonymity for participants, I asked liaisons to provide me with a list of 10-12 people, from which I selected six.

Interviews

Contacts to set up interviews were made by phone and e-mail, and potential interviewees also had an opportunity to read a brief summary of the study. Eighteen individual interviews, each approximately 90 minutes in length, were the primary method of data collection utilized in this study. Kvale (1996) takes a postmodern view of interviewing, terming the qualitative research interview "a construction site of knowledge." Emphasizing the conversational, or two-sided nature of the interview, Kvale sees it as a mutually beneficial interaction in which both parties learn, and in which narrative, linguistic, contextual, and interrelational elements are all important. As I conducted my interviews for this study, the following considerations were crucial: location, groundwork, the question protocol, my responsiveness, and my stance as a learner.

Interview locations. The act of going out to meet with participants at their workplaces seemed at first a matter of course, but the significance of this should not be overlooked. If achieving *Verstehen* means coming to an understanding of the world from another's point of view, then it would seem logical that one should physically enter into that world and see what it looks like. Interviews were usually held in the participants' offices, if privacy and quiet could be assured (Creswell, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). A few of the interviews took place in department conference rooms or a nearby lounge, and two people sat down with me in an absent co-worker's office, one because he felt his own office was too messy. Two interviews took place in what was more or less the

"domain" of the interviewee-- for one, a boiler/laundry room where we spoke with the sound of a washer and dryer in the background, and for another, an extensive state-of-the-art nursing lab. Meeting with the interviewees on their respective "turfs" was indeed an important step, and offered a window into their worlds that never would have been afforded me by a survey or a telephone interview.

Groundwork. After establishing rapport with brief informal talk, my first task was to make sure that participants understood, in a general way, the nature of the study. If they had not had an opportunity to read the summary of the study, I provided a brief verbal explanation. Most importantly, I assured them of the confidentiality of their responses and my intent to camouflage participant and institution names when I wrote about the study's finding's. Participants were asked to sign an "Informed Consent" form (see Appendix B), on which they acknowledged that they understood the parameters of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Kvale, 1996). At that point, I obtained their permission for audiotaping, emphasizing that this would help me document their stories thoroughly and accurately.

The questions. An interview protocol, based upon the initial research questions, guided the interview process (see Appendix C). This protocol was amenable to modification as data collection went along. The first few questions were designed to further establish rapport and develop a level of comfort and trust with the interviewee. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) remark on the importance of ordering one's questions carefully, so that those at the beginning serve as a "warm-up" (p. 71) and as a way of letting the interviewee know the questions will be manageable. In addition, they note that questions near the beginning may be "foundational" (p. 71) to what is asked later, and

that care should be taken not to place questions too close together on one's list, if the questions may have an interactive effect. There are also certain questions that should be placed at the end, because they have the effect of drawing the interview to a close and helping the interviewee synthesize his/her overall impressions about the topic. Glesne and Peshkin's words of advice were taken into account in the construction of the interview protocol for this study.

From my experience conducting interviews as part of other research studies, I knew that it was a rare (and sometimes boring) interview that followed one's protocol exactly, and that it was this element of unpredictability that made qualitative research interesting and rich. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) refute the notion of an unstructured interview and tell us, "Every interview has a structure. The difference lies in how that structure is negotiatied. For some interviews, the structure is predetermined. For others, it is shaped in the process" (p. 58). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) recommend that interviewers be "dominant but submissive" (pp. 81-82), controlling the flow of the interview, but working hard to keep it interviewee-centered and rewarding for both parties. The key issue seems to be one of balance, between using interview time wisely and making sure the interviewee feels listened to and cared about. In contrast to Creswell's (1998) advice to "Stick to the questions" (p. 125), I sought to artfully draw out each of the interviewees during our conversation, using the protocol as a useful guide, not as a rigid recipe. This strategy, I believe, did much more to illuminate the original research questions, which was my goal in the end.

Responsiveness. One additional issue which posed a challenge for me as an interviewer with this population was the issue of responsiveness. As someone who used

to be a master's prepared professional staff member in a community college, I was concerned about what balance to strike in my conversations with the interviewees. Even the experts seem to be divided on this topic. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) encourage interviewers not to communicate whether they share feelings or experiences in common with their interviewees. Rather, in order to keep the interviewee's experiences at the center, the interviewer can make comments that indicate empathy without revealing an opinion or taking sides. In contrast, however, Ely and colleagues (1991) note the following:

> We of this writing team are of the opinion that often an interviewer does no harm and indeed does some good by entering judiciously to let the interviewee know that you "have been there" and can sympathize. . . : A growing trust is the basis for richer interviews. (p. 61)

The authors suggest treading cautiously, neither becoming the focus of the interview or letting it become just a friendly conversation (or a gripe session).

Researcher as learner. Perhaps the success of my 18 interviews was anchored in an attitude which prevailed on my part in my interviews, and one which helped resolve the detachment dilemma I experienced going into the study. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) remind us that a good interviewer is, among other things, naïve, taking on an attitude wherein one sets aside assumptions and gently pushes the interviewee to elaborate, illustrate, and illuminate the topic at hand. A teaching relationship is effected, in essence, which speaks more to the openness of the researcher as a student than the interviewee as a teacher. They assert, "[W]hen you are a learner, you get taught" (p. 81) (see also Ely et al., 1991; Moustakas, 1994). As it turned out, it was much easier to maintain a responsive stance than I had imagined. The interviewees were eager to share their

stories, and I was eager to hear them. A few asked about my background and I told them, but all seemed to open up in the genuinely understanding interview climate I provided them. When I nodded or said a few words in response to their remarks, the identification was real, and I think they trusted me. They taught me a great deal.

Document Review

In order to flesh out the individual portraits which were drawn for me in the interviews, some additional documents were useful in this study. There were two types of material which I sought, both of which could be classified as "public documents," according to Creswell (1998, p. 121). The first group of documents were obtained from my liaison or gatekeeper. At each host institution, I collected a college catalog, a faculty-staff handbook, and any printed information available on number of faculty and staff, including their education levels and salary levels, and, when possible, a full list of the job titles of those persons counted as "professional staff" (non-faculty).

The second group of documents came from the individual staff members whom I interviewed. Memos to professional staff, committee correspondence, information on staff development activities, bargaining unit documents, advancement/promotion paperwork, and testimonial letters from students or their families were all illustrative, and helped round out the picture I came to paint of the work lives of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges.

Field Log

A field log was maintained throughout the study to make note of contacts, appointment schedules, directions, and the like, but more importantly, to provide a place to record informal impressions, physical and cultural observations, reflections on

interviews, interview transcripts, and notes on methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Crowson, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ely and colleagues (1991) note, "The log is the place where each qualitative researcher faces the self as instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method" (p. 69). I used three lined spiral notebooks, one for each college, for my field logs; this way, I could go back over my field notes periodically, and make notes on methodology or emerging themes as the study proceeded.

Data Analysis

Discussion of field logs and their use provides a timely segue into the topic of data analysis, since it is this same recursion and reflection that is at the heart of qualitative data analysis. As Mile and Huberman (1994) note:

> A chronic problem of qualitative research is that it is done chiefly with words, not with numbers. Words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings. This makes them harder to move around and work with. Worse still, most words are meaningless unless you look backward or forward to other words. (p. 56)

My approach to data analysis consisted of two main phases: that which occurred during data collection, and that which occurred once data collection was completed.

Data Analysis During Data Collection

As I collected my data, two things were particularly important: that the process of data analysis be simultaneous with data collection, and that I use my field log as an instrument in this process.

Timing and directionality. Ely and colleagues (1991) assert that "qualitative research involves almost continuous and certainly progressive data analysis from the very beginning of data collection" (p. 140). Several authors, including Crowson (1993), LeCompte and Preissle (1993), and Tesch (1990), note the difference between the data analysis done by quantitative versus qualitative researchers. Part of the difference is timing; generally, quantitative researchers wait until data collection is complete to begin analyzing data, while in qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing part of the data collection process and continues long afterward.

Another important difference is in its directionality. Crowson (1993) contrasts traditional scientific method (where hypotheses are formulated in advance and tested deductively in the field) with the construction of inductive knowledge "from the ground up" (p. 172), in which working hypotheses are developed as the study unfolds. It seemed to me that constant engagement with my data would not only prompt me to refine interview questions and probes as necessary, but that it would also help me identify and track hypotheses more accurately.

The log as reflexivity tool. My field log, mentioned in the previous section, played an important part in this ongoing data analysis, since it included my methodological and analytical memos, interview transcripts, interview notes, and other researcher notes. I revisited my field log frequently during the data collection phase, to stay attuned to emerging themes and to reflect upon potentially unforeseen but useful interview questions and categories. Indeed, through such reflection, I discovered one area of questioning (related to decision making) that did not generate as much interest as another topic that my interviewees and I explored by way of other discussions (career

path and professional development). Accordingly, I gave this topic more time in subsequent interviews--with rich, important results.

Data Analysis After Data Collection

The data analysis which I conducted after I had collected all my data had four important components: my initial review with research questions in mind, my search for themes, valuing discrepant data, and aiming for thick description.

Initial review. Once all eighteen interview tapes were transcribed, I followed LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) advice of going back and reviewing my initial research questions. Since these were the questions which provided the framework for the inquiry, I kept them foremost in mind as data analysis proceeded. The next step was scanning, or simply re-reading all data in light of the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), and making notes on a separate sheet regarding ideas, relationships, and possible codes that I noted while reading.

Culling out themes. It was during this process that what Ely and colleagues (1991) call "thinking units" (p. 143) began to emerge. These are unique to each study, and reflect the types of information being collected, crossed with the research questions which guided data collection in the first place. Thinking units are very general categories, terms such as "meanings," "practices," "roles," "relationships," "interactions," "strategies," "philosophy," and so on (Ely et al., 1991, pp. 144-145). They help the researcher to begin the sorting and sifting process, enabling him or her to formulate categories and develop a coding system to mark the locations of data that seem to fit each category (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Ely et al., 1991). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) liken this search for emerging patterns to "assembling a jigsaw puzzle" (p. 237), where edge

pieces are laid in place first, the sharpest images are assembled next, and gradually the rest of the puzzle is filled in.

For me, this puzzle assembly process involved analytic induction (Crowson, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990), noting patterns, categories, clusters, and logical connections during the process of scanning one's data. At the heart of this process was a search for themes. Ely (1984) defines a theme as follows: "a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact" (cited in Ely et al., 1991, p. 150). In my case, as I read and reread the data, I made note of themes and categories, such as "fiscal responsibilities," "teaching involvement," "customer orientation," "importance: high," "importance: low," "mobility:none," "mobility to administration," "mobility to faculty," and so on. As I sought to piece the puzzle together, I literally cut out my notes into slips according to theme clusters and arranged them on large paper, using a marker to indicate key themes and to show the logical connection between ideas. My analysis process was not over once I started writing, however. I found that the connections I had first glued down in a certain order sometimes had a different configuration once I returned to the data and let the interviewees tell the story.

The value of outliers. As Ely reminds us, it is not only the search for unifying themes that is important, but also the notation of statements, cases, or stories that don't seem to fit with the themes. Indeed, I found that the existence of "negative cases" (those which seemed to contradict the emerging rule) and "discrepant cases" (those which were a variation on a general theme) only served to make my findings more precise and rich in

the long run (Ely et al., 1991, p. 161; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 250-251). For example, while most of the interviewees in my study cared a great deal about their mobility in their institutions, there were two outliers who were near retirement and were not that concerned about it. Or while most of the specialists indicated that they had a great deal of autonomy in their work, a small number indicated that they had to review many daily decisions with a supervisor. These stories, which were different from the mainstream, were still valuable because they helped enrich the portrait I was painting and make it more realistic.

While a quantitative researcher might term negative or discrepant data as "outliers," the phenomenologist sees such data as more grist for the mill. Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "[T]he outlier is your friend" (p. 269). If one's goal is to render a depiction of how people see a phenomenon and how they perceive their world, then it would seem logical that this depiction would not be so simple, due to the subjectivity of each individual (Bogdan & Biklen, 1993). Themes and discrepancies in the data have to be linked back to the data and communicated to the reader using "thick description" (Denzin, 1989, cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 184; Geertz, 1973, cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 36).

In the thick of it. The essence of thick description is finding ways to let the research subjects tell of their experiences in their own voices. Hence, my analysis also became a journey through the words of the study participants, noting those which could tell the story better than I ever could. I was merely a weaver of sorts, choosing the colors or thread (themes) that matched most of the found objects (participants' stories), which were woven in here and there—including those that didn't quite match the thread

colors (discrepant cases). The process of thick description was by nature recursive, leading me back to the original aims of phenomenology: to achieve *Verstehen*, to document and understand a particular phenomenon--in this case, the work lives and experiences of 18 master's prepared professional community college staff--as seen through the eyes of those who experienced it.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

In a quantitative study, issues of reliability and validity would now be addressed. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) bristle at the idea of applying terminology and concepts of positivist inquiry to the interpretivist inquiry process, saying, "[W]e have found that the language of positivist research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work, and its use is often a defensive measure that muddies the waters" (p. 95). Rather, the concepts of trustworthiness and credibility are used (Creswell, 1998; Crowson, 1993; Ely et al., 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) make the following comment:

> The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

Trustworthiness goes hand in hand with credibility, which relates more to one's actual fieldwork, a "covering all bases" approach which ensures that statements made in the end can be supported by the data in more than one way. There are several strategies suggested for ensuring trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative study. For example, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) list five criteria for establishing trustworthiness

of a study (p. 324), and Creswell (1998) provides a more concrete listing of eight strategies that can be employed (pp. 201-203).

Trustworthiness: Key Strategies

Three of Creswell's suggested strategies have already been mentioned in this chapter, and were utilized in this study.

Triangulation. First, triangulation in the form of multiple data sources—interview data, institutional documents, and field logs--was employed to approach the study of master's level professional staff from different angles (Crowson, 1994; Ely et al., 1991; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation is important because it "improves the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible."

Thick description. Second, the use of "thick description" cannot be emphasized enough; my analysis (and my presentation of it in writing) had to be done in a way that was thorough, detailed, and representative of the voice and positionality of the subjects (Creswell, 1998). While I, as the person familiar with all eighteen interviewees, could link their stories, it was still my responsibility to let them tell their stories, in their own words. If phenomenology has as a key value respect for multiple constructions of reality, then my work would only be credible if I remained true to those constructions by using thick description. As Lincoln and Guba note:

> In order to demonstrate "truth value," the naturalist must show that he or she has represented those multiple constructions adequately, that is, that the reconstructions. . . that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities. (pp. 295-296)

Epoche and bracketing. A third action which indicates trustworthiness is acknowledgement of researcher bias at the outset of a study, which I sought to do by noting my own experience as a master's-prepared professional staff member and my dilemma about whether to disclose this fact to research subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Creswell, 1998). Researcher bias, or the researcher's feeling of any kind about the topic, the participants, the methodology, and so on, needs to be limited—not eliminated, as Bogdan and Biklen (1982) remind us (pp. 42-43). The technique whereby one's own experiences and biases are set aside in order to consider closely the phenomenon at hand is referred to as *Epoche*, which relates to the researcher's attitude of naivete, and to the reflexivity that Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to in their discussion of field journaling. Moustakas (1994) offers the following commentary on the *Epoche:*

> The *Epoche* is a way of looking and being, an unfettered stance. Whatever or whoever appears in our consciousness is approached with an openness, seeing just what is there and allowing what is there to linger. This is a difficult task and requires that we allow a phenomenon or experience to be just what it is and to come to know it as it presents itself. (pp. 85-86)

Several authors also refer to "bracketing," a way of setting aside one's own assumptions and preconceptions, in order to understand the phenomenon through the eyes of the informants (Creswell, 1998; Ely et al., 1991; Kvale, 1996; Moustakas, 1994). In order to make this study as trustworthy as possible, the use of bracketing and *Epoche* was imperative. This is where the use of a field log was extremely helpful to me. Pausing for written reflection on the research process as I went along enabled me to bracket my own assumptions, and to consider my interviewees' perceptions through as unfiltered a lens as possible.

Additional Credibility Strategies

Two additional methods of enhancing trustworthiness also merited my consideration. Specifically, conducting member checks and archiving a portion of the data also added to the credibility of my study.

Member checks. First, I conducted "member checks" as the data collection proceeded (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this as "getting feedback from informants" (p.275). In this study, copies of transcribed interviews were shared with interviewees as soon as they were completed, and interviewees had an opportunity to reflect further, jot notes in margins, and clarify statements. In order to expedite this process, I sent each transcript out to the interviewee with a cover letter designating a deadline two weeks later for response, with the caveat that if no response was received by that date, interviewee approval of the transcript could be assumed. This strategy encouraged timely response by the interviewees. Some mailed their transcripts back with notations in the text or margins, and several called, e-mailed, or sent notes to indicate their approval, make minor corrections, or share additional thoughts they had had since the interview.

Data archiving. A second tactic which helped bolster trustworthiness was offered by Crowson (1993), who suggested "the accumulation of referential adequacy materials" (p. 194), also known as "archiving." In this technique, a small portion of data in a study is withheld from analysis until tentative conclusions are drawn. Then they are retrieved and analyzed to see if they echo the themes and findings emerging so far. I held back one interview from each of the three community college sites and did not look at them until quite a bit of data analysis had occurred. I pulled them back into the fold when I fully

engaged in the writing process, and found that they either strengthened claims I made about the data set or provided interesting discrepant cases that were also worthy of consideration.

Ethical Considerations

Finally, but certainly not least importantly, there was the issue of ethics. Because ethics in qualitative research are so closely tangled with the procedures that ensure trustworthiness and the problems that arise with the use of the "human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 106-107), it was difficult to separate this out. For example, two of the criteria for trustworthiness listed by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) are entangled with ethical issues: "fairness, the balanced representation of multiple realities in a situation," and "tactical authenticity, [a] potential benefit of the inquiry to all concerned" (p. 324). Creswell (1998) summarizes Lincoln's (1995) eight standards for qualitative research, which can be bulleted as follows:

- Standards set by one's inquiry community.
- The standard of positionality.
- Acknowledging that research is done within and about communities.
- Giving voice to participants.
- Critical subjectivity, where the researcher is aware of his or her own psychological and emotional states.
- Reciprocity between the researcher and those being studied.
- Respect for the collaborative and egalitarian aspects of research.
- Sharing of the privileges of research. (Lincoln, 1995; cited in Creswell, 1998, pp. 195-196)

Soltis (1989) posits that education is a "moral enterprise," and research conducted to understand it or improve upon it has an obligation to be ethical in its processes and its utilization. This means adhering to principles such as honesty, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect, all of which I built into the design and conduct of the proposed research, and which I made a full-faith effort to uphold throughout.

Limitations of the Study

There were three potential limitations of this study which I identified at its outset: questions about its generalizability, the role of the gatekeeper at each college, and the issue of critical subjectivity. In this section, I address each limitation in turn.

The Issue of Generalizability

The qualitative conundrum. The first potential limitation of this study was one often cited by researchers conducting interview-based qualitative studies with a small number of subjects and institutions. Specifically, they remind us that the findings of the study are not generalizable to other persons with similar positions in other institutions. While this honest nod to the small sample size and the subjectivity of one's findings can be commended, it almost seems that these researchers are discrediting their work upfront. In one sense, dwelling on generalizability may be those things that Ely and colleagues find irksome—applying the terminology (and the paradigm) of quantitative research to that which is qualitative. The interpretivist paradigm is one that is attuned to individual experience and constructions of reality. Is worrying about (or even mentioning) "generalizability" antithetical to intense study and analysis of an individual, institution, or culture?

Approaches used. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) address some commonly asked questions about qualitative research, one of which is, "Are qualitative findings generalizable?" (p. 41-42). They don't answer this question directly, but note that different researchers approach this issue in different ways, such as issuing a disclaimer with the presentation of the findings, addressing generalizability in larger, less intense studies later, or leaving the drawing of connections with a larger sample to other researchers. Yet another way of dealing with generalizability, the authors note, is utilized by researchers who "are more interested in deriving universal statements of social processes rather than statements of commonality between similar settings" (p. 40).

The notion of "piquancy." For the record, I stated up front that, due to the small sample size and limited number of institutions involved in this study, findings from this study could not be generalized to all master's prepared professional staff in all public community colleges. That being said, I proposed a new attribute in lieu of generalizability that may have more relevance to qualitative studies like mine: *piquancy*. Specifically, would the thick descriptions of the phenomena at hand be sufficiently engaging and compelling that they might stimulate others to look more closely at the target population in their own institutions, seek to understand them in new ways, or deal with them differently? Maybe the interest in the topic, or a concern about the target population, was the thing which could be "generalized" to other settings, rather than the findings themselves. [My notion of piquancy differed from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of "transferability," which pertained more to generalizability of findings to other contexts, depending on the similarity of the "sending" and "receiving" contexts.] The

present study may not be generalizable in a traditional (read positivistic) sense, but it is piquant.

Gatekeeper Role

A second potential limitation related to the pivotal role that the gatekeeper/ liaison played at each institution and how this might have affected subject selection. It might have been be possible that, in identifying subjects for me to study, the liaison would choose only those individuals guaranteed to represent the institution positively (or negatively, depending on the liaison's orientation). In an effort to present a balanced view, it was important that I work with each liaison to identify and clarify subject criteria and the importance of balancing subjects across descriptive categories outlined earlier in this chapter. Judging by the stories and remarks shared by the 18 interviewees, it seemed that I was given a balanced sample of individuals to interview.

Critical Subjectivity

A final possible limitation has already been addressed in this chapter: the issue of my own experience and potential bias as a researcher, and the necessity of *Epoche* and bracketing. Lincoln's (1984) notion of "critical subjectivity" was important here, especially as it related to my own awareness during the research process. The use of the field log as a journal of sorts was instrumental in this regard, as I worked to separate what was mine from what was theirs and to keep the line in place. "What qualitative researchers attempt to do," Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state, "is to objectively study the subjective states of their subjects" (p. 42).

The Reward

Now that I have justified and detailed the research methods utilized in this study, and the ways in which I ensured that trustworthiness, credibility, and piquancy would be evident in my work, it is time to turn to what was essentially the reward for all my efforts--the stories of the eighteen master's prepared professional staff members who participated in this study--stories of the work that constituted their days, and their multiple perspectives of their lives in their community colleges. In the following chapters, I relate the specialists' accounts--and views of--their work in their community colleges.

CHAPTER 4:

THE WORK OF THE SPECIALISTS

Why do faculty think that all classified staff are secretaries or custodians? What makes them think that? Do they think that's all you need to run a college? Why do they think that? The perception is that we are all the same, and yet we are an incredibly diverse group with different backgrounds, education, fields, really incredibly diverse. -- Barb

I think that the classified staff as a whole are the backbone of the college. They keep it all going together. They are supporting a lot of big decision makers or the faculty doing their job and all that kind of stuff... There is one group that if they said, "We're not coming in for one week," I don't see how the institution could go on for that week. We'd have to shut down. The backbone, the day to day serving the students, implementing all these decisions-- that is done by the Classified Staff, and done real well. --Angie

I would hope that I could be a shining example that classified people are good and are worthy and do good work. I want to be that. -- Ben

The work of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges is varied and complex, and can be thought of in multiple ways. In this chapter, I respond to the first research question that animated this study, "What is the nature of the work of various master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges, and how do these individuals describe and assess their work lives?" In doing so, I first describe the three community colleges where I interviewed professional staff. Next, I describe the daily work of the specialists in this study, crafting individual portraits of each. From here, I examine these portraits collectively and offer seven analytical observations regarding the work of the group. To be sure, interviewees' responses to this research question also touch upon issues of professionalism and place-- issues addressed in Chapters Five and Six.

Setting the Context: The Institutions and Definition of Specialist Work

All three institutions selected for this study are public community colleges in Illinois. While these institutions were not being studied per se, each provided the context and backdrop for informing the daily work of the master's prepared professional staff I interviewed. As such, I offer a brief portrait of each institution below.[3]

College of Suburbia

The College of Suburbia (COS) is located approximately 20 miles from a major city, and was founded over 30 years ago. The College is situated on a large piece of property which is surrounded mostly by residences; the campus consists of several buildings of various ages, including a state-of-the art library/resource center and a new fine arts center. College of Suburbia serves a large community college district of nearly one million residents and boasts an enrollment of almost 30,000 students, who take credit and non-credit courses on campus and at several off-campus sites. Approximately 2,500 full and part time faculty, staff, and administrators are employed by the College. Master's prepared professional staff are included in a broader group, the classified staff, for whom there are 16 "ranges" or salary categories. The upper ranges of the 16 include but are not limited to those professional staff who hold master's degrees. Of the almost 500 full time classified staff at the College, 11% hold master's degrees and 1% hold doctorates. All classified staff are represented in institutional governance by the "Classified Personnel Association," which, though not a "bargaining unit" (as in union), recently helped secure a three-year employment contract for classified staff which was described by some interviewees as being quite satisfactory. The back of the college catalog lists the names and academic credentials of its faculty and administrators, but not its staff.

[3] Institutions have been assigned pseudonyms, as have the individual interview participants. That said, due to the unique work of the professional staff members within the realms of their individual colleges, interviewee comments will seldom be linked to their specific institutions. For the individuals concerned, this offers an extra measure of anonymity and protection.

Town and Country Community College

Currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, Town and Country Community College (TCCC) enrolls almost 15,000 students in credit and non-credit courses at two campuses and approximately 40 off-campus extension sites throughout its service area. The main campus is located approximately 40 miles from a major city, and the drive to the campus from the interstate features open land, farms, and wooded areas, with a few housing developments and commercial establishments. The town where the college is located has a population of less than 20,000. Students are served by approximately 300 full-time faculty, staff, and administrators. At this institution, master's prepared professional staff are included in a group referred to as "specialists," defined in the faculty-staff handbook as individuals "employed to provide technical or specialized support or expertise to assist in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of an administrative or academic department... selected because of special training, qualifications, and/or experience relevant to the task assigned." Specialists have some type of college credential, such as an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree; the specialists chosen for this study all held at least a master's degree.

The specialists at Town and Country College are considered a separate governance group from the classified staff, and are represented by a "Specialist Senate." Specialists and classified staff at the college are not unionized, though they have had some contact recently with the Illinois Federation of Teachers regarding the issue of possible unionization together as a broader "staff" group. In the back of the college's current catalog, full time faculty, professional, specialist, and administrative staff are listed, with their department names or job titles and their educational credentials.

Urban Metro College

Urban Metro College (UMC) was the third institution where I interviewed staff. UMC is located less than ten miles from the city limits of a major Midwestern city. Founded as a "junior college" 75 years ago, the college has been situated on its current campus site for almost 25 years. The campus features five buildings and is surrounded by urban residential streets lined with bungalows and brick apartment buildings, as well as some industry. There is a major expressway and a freight rail yard within a few miles of the campus. The college employs over 150 full-time faculty, staff, and administrators to serve its nearly 5,000 students. Most of the master's-prepared professional staff interviewed for this study were part of a broader "classified staff" employee group, which had recently unionized and signed a three-year employment contract beginning the previous academic year. Classified staff at the college are divided into six salary ranges (there is recent talk of establishing a seventh level), and the master's prepared staff interviewed were mostly situated in the top three range categories. The back of the college catalog lists academic credentials for administrators and faculty; all levels of classified staff are listed with their job titles, but not with their academic credentials.

The three institutions included in this study met selection criteria described in Chapter Three, which are outlined in Table 5.

The Term "Specialist"

It is important to point out that only one of the three institutions participating in this study, Town and Country Community College, actually referred to the group that included master's level professional staff as "specialists." At both College of Suburbia and at Urban Metro, master's level professional staff occupied various strata of a very broad personnel spectrum: classified staff. The term "specialist" was chosen to refer to this employee group in this dissertation and its title, because each person interviewed was found to specialize in their professional area at the college and was often seen as an authority on a particular field or area of college operations.

Table 5. Characteristics of Institutions Included in This Study

	COS	TCCC	UMC
Miles from Major City	11-29	30 or more	10 or less
Number of Students	20,000 or more	5,001-19,999	5,000 or less
Staff Collective Bargaining Agreement	No union	No union	Union established and active

Portraits of Specialist Work

Six master's-prepared professional staff members at each of three Illinois public community colleges, a total of eighteen subjects, were interviewed for this study. Their work areas could be loosely aggregated into five general categories: student affairs, campus/community relations, academic department staff, instructional support, and specific student populations. Lists of interviewees for each category are shown in Table 6. For each specialist, I provide a general description of his or her main job duties, and outline, when possible, what a typical work day is like for this person. Information about the individual's educational and professional background is incorporated into the vignette where appropriate. Then, the interviewee's comments on important or unique aspects of his/her work are shared.

Table 6. Specialist Interviewees by Category

Student Affairs	Campus/Comm	Academic Dept.	Instr. Support	Specific Pops.
Angie	Don	Barb	Matthew	Emma
Ben	Margaret	Betty	Stacy	Frank
Beth	Mark	Willis		Jeannette
Lucy				Roy
Marcia				Ted

Student Affairs Specialists

Angie. Angie has coordinated the work of the academic advising center at her community college for the last five years. She worked previously in her college's records office, and holds a master's in adult education. She supervises the work of several part-time faculty advisors, who keep up to date on degree requirements at the college, as well as the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI),[4] and use this information daily in their work advising students. Advisement in Angie's office is done all on a walk-in or phone-in basis; the emphasis is on availability and accessibility when students have questions. Most of Angie's direct contact on the job is with her staff, but she tries to see one or two students a day, to avoid getting too removed from the students served by the center. She sees her main "customer" as being the college's students, but acknowledged that, "We are also careful to understand that the faculty, the full time faculty and the part-time teaching faculty are advisors; we try to help them with their job as best we can."

Angie and her staff work to serve the campus community through various projects, many of which she has initiated during her tenure as coordinator. For example, the academic advising center has joined forces with the college's admissions office in offering

a collaborative orientation program for new students. In addition, the need for student workers at orientation and the lack of funds to train them led to Angie's work with colleagues to develop an innovative, win-win solution:

> We realized we needed students working in the student orientation, current students working with new students, but we didn't have any budget at all. And we needed to train them well, so we developed a class in '98, "Leadership Skills for Peer Mentors." We call the other leaders peer mentors. We selected them by sending a letter to all the students who are in academic honors, just because we needed a group similar, to ask them if they would be interested in being the student leaders in orientation. We told them what their commitment would be and they would act as student leaders with small groups orientation. They have to go to the six week class. It meets two times a week for six weeks and they get three hours of credit and we tuition waive it.

This program has been so successful that Angie now supervises the work of an additional part-time faculty advisor who works specifically with this class and program. Another initiative which has flourished under Angie's leadership is an annual "expo" which focuses on the needs of adult learners and showcases "non-traditional" programs and majors at four-year institutions to which these students may be eligible for transfer. Also, she helped develop the college's "fast track program" for adult learners, an accelerated program which results in an associate's degree.

These varied, important projects are carried out in addition to the basic maintenance and updating type of work that must be done constantly to the advising notebooks that the academic advisors use in their work with students. Staying up-to-date on requirements in the college's more than 160 degrees and certificates requires networking, interactions with various departments, and ongoing awareness of curricular developments at the college. Angie also sees it as the responsibility of her staff to make faculty aware of the effects of curricular changes on students:

> We implement the decisions that the faculty make about the degree so we have to respect that, that's the way the organization is set up. Sometimes I think it behooves us to at least in a polite way say how different changes to

[4] IAI is a statewide articulation agreement between several public and private two-year and four-year higher education institutions in Illinois.

> the degree really affect people working with students and the students as a whole.

Angie not only has to make sure that her advisors are kept apprised of internal curricular developments, but also that they turn an eye outward and stay on top of transfer requirements at four-year institutions, many of which have been affected by the parameters of the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

All in all, Angie sees the work that she and her colleagues do as performing an essential support role in the college. When asked for a metaphor that described her work in her institution, she offered:

> I think that what we do and what I do and who we are, we are certainly a support. . . . Let's say [this college] is a tree and we'd be one of the branches and I think we might be a big branch and there are going to be pieces off of that that we're going to be supporting and maybe the students are like the fruit or something in that, like, the better we do our job the stronger we are, then the stronger the next piece is going to be.

Ben. Ben is one of two student activities coordinators at his college; the other individual focuses on programming and recreation, while his focus is on leadership development for students. When we met, he had recently worked with student leaders to coordinate a beginning-of-the-year convocation for student leaders, which ended up including 100 students, faculty advisors of organizations, and college administrators. Aside from being simply a kick-off event for the year, it was also an event that had an unexpected positive result. Ben explained:

> The greatest thing that happened Monday was. . . we purposely invited the president and vice presidents and a couple of the associate vice presidents, because we think it's important that they know what our student leaders are doing. They all showed up. Thursday I got a wonderful thank you and pat on the back thing from an associate vice president, who said, "We're applying for a grant to basically transfer the core values into our curriculum. We've decided to include your leadership program in that grant." So I'm going to get money out of that.

Ben is responsible for scheduling a leadership-oriented event every month. These range from seminars on topics such as goal setting, networking, and business etiquette, to a fall

leadership conference at another college, to a spring break trip to a college doing interesting things in the area of student leadership.

Ben also serves as advisor for the student government association and, in the two years he has been in his position, has helped turn the organization around somewhat in a positive direction. Ben viewed his role in this group as very important, and had learned how to balance his role between over-advisement and letting the students learn by experience:

> So I advise them. I really take an educational approach with that as well, because a lot of their mistakes become valuable to them. I remember last year they wanted to do this big newsletter every week or every two weeks or something. You know, six pages. I'm like, "Don't do this! If you want to do a front and a back and maybe monthly and you may be sane after that." "No, no we're going to do it this way!" So they did it that way for two times. . . and then they came back, "You know, you were right! What you said was right."

He relishes his mentor role and enjoys seeing the students grow. He describes how student representatives are included on many college-wide committees, and how this gives them not only a voice on campus, but a chance to practice being adults: "We dress them up and put on a necktie or a nice dress or skirt. . . . So we did a little training on that. How you walk and talk and act like a regular lady kind of thing. (laughs) Eliza Doolittle." Through committee work, and by using leadership skills in the clubs and organizations, students learn important skills which prepare them to be productive citizens in the future. Ben elaborated on the value of the leadership skills training his office provided for students:

> We were killing ourselves doing all this club development things, and they [the students] were not getting anything out of it. Well, [we thought], if we did it the other way around, teach them the skills, then [maybe] they're going to practice that in their clubs and organizations. . . the service learning model, if you will. You're getting credit for things other than what's in the textbook. You're learning things that are going to be more valuable in the long run. The things you're going to learn here are what you're going to do in your office. It's going to be in your community when you join the Kiwanis Club, or you're on the church council and you have to plan a picnic. It's life.

Ben sees himself as constantly learning along with the students; in fact, he is currently enrolled in a doctoral program in educational leadership, and has conducted

studies or developed class projects to answer questions raised in his own department or others on campus. He also takes advantage of professional development activities offered by the institution, and encourages his staff to do the same, especially those which relate to multiculturalism, since the college's student body is changing and the student activities office works with a diverse array of students.

Ben came to his present position with a master's in a human services field, and years of professional experience in early childhood education and social services. He indicated in the interview that he felt he had found his niche in the community college. Ben's enthusiasm for the community college setting as a place for life-changing learning was admirable. As he told me:

> I like seeing people grow, I like seeing people change as a result of their effort. I've certainly benefited from that. I'm a dirt farmer's kid--what am I doing here with a doctorate? I never had that ambition growing up. But something clicked in college for me, "This is all right! This is good!"

Beth. Beth has worked almost three years at her college as a coordinator of various testing programs, including the administration of GRE, GED, LSAT and other nationally standardized tests, and several institutional exams, such as placement tests for math, English and foreign language, and proficiency exams for students exiting specific programs. Beth holds a master's degree in psychology; after working in the marketing research field for a time, she longed to return to the higher education setting she had enjoyed during graduate school. Working as a specialist in testing is her priority on the job. This involves keeping track of computerized test "inventory" and reordering exams when necessary, coordinating the scheduling of student test-taking appointments, and supervising two part-time aides who work directly with students in the testing lab and also proctor the exams. A second area of Beth's work is her post-test advisement with students, specifically those who have taken the college's placement exams. She viewed this as an important part of her job:

> When they are done testing, I meet with every student. And I go through their scores with them and I talk to them about what their scores mean, their

> percentile ranking, what their raw score means, the class that they place into. And I think that that's really important and I would hate for us to get away from that interaction with students after getting their scores. A lot of schools just mail their scores out to the students. And I think not only does it need explanation, but because so many of our students need the skill building courses, I think that needs to be done in a sensitive manner. You're letting the student know where they're at, but yet give them the encouragement to know that they can do it. And we have services that will help you if you want the help.

A third aspect of Beth's job is research, particularly on students who have withdrawn from classes. In an effort to help the college understand why students leave classes or leave the college, she has developed a brief questionnaire which students dropping a class or classes are asked to fill out. Beth explained what kind of data were collected and analyzed:

> I design[ed] an instrument and administer it twice a year to students who are withdrawing from a class or classes. We ask them on a voluntary basis to fill out the survey asking them why they are withdrawing from the class, if there is anything that [this college] can do, could have done, or services we could do to help them to stay in the course. And then ask them questions on what resources they used and how they determined which classes to take, if they came in for advising, if they attended the course, if so how many times. . . . So I enter all that into Excel, and then I download it onto SPSS and do all the statistics, and so now I am in the process of writing the report. Also students get the writing responses so I put all those together so we can get a feel for where students are coming from and what are some of the variables that are involved in their lives.

The report from this annual research project is shared with various administrators at the college, to help them develop a better understanding of students and what either turns them away from the school (institutional factors), or what keeps them from succeeding in school (personal factors). The college then uses this information to constantly improve its services.

Beth describes the work during the school year as "cyclical," noting that at the beginning and the end of the semesters, she, her aides, and other staff at the center are busy testing and meeting with students for advisement. The middle half of the semester, however, is a slower time for the advising and testing functions, and this is when Beth works on her ongoing research projects. A sociable person at heart, Beth told me:

> At some point I kind of miss the students a little bit. I'm just sitting at the computer mostly during the day and it's nice to have that variety but I wish it just wasn't . . . where it's just all students at one time and all research at another time. . . . It gets a little lonesome sometimes.

In sum, Beth has found the type of work and the setting that suits her well for now. "I really like working with students," she told me. "And I really like working in an educational setting."

Lucy. Lucy has been in her job as financial aid coordinator for her institution for less than a year, and came to her position with a master's in social work and experience working in a program for at-risk secondary students. She runs a small office and oversees the work of two full-time staff, one part-time worker, and three student aides. She does not see her position as one that should be fully managerial, with no student contact, however. The number one priority of the office is processing student financial aid applications, and Lucy shares that focus. Lucy and her two full-time colleagues share this responsibility equally, splitting the list of student "customers" three ways, to ensure that they get to know each student's unique situation. As Lucy explained:

> It's more than paperwork. It's students coming in with questions, and just taking care of their concerns. You know, there are different special circumstances that students come to us with, and we can do some things to adjust students' income so it better reflects what they are currently earning, and things like that, instead of using just the standard formula that we're supposed to use. [As] special circumstances come up, as students add and drop classes, we advise them how it's going to affect their financial aid and things like that. I would say, on a daily basis, it's probably at least every—in the middle of the semester, like now, it'd be three or four students a day, but at the beginning of the semester, it's probably 50-100 students a day. A lot of students coming in. . . . I think up until, when I started, the system was sort of, everybody helped anybody. There wasn't any splitting up of the alphabet. . . . You get to know the student a little bit better and know what their situation is, rather than having three people handle the same folder. It can be a little bit confusing.

The processing of financial aid paperwork also involves strict adherence to federal guidelines, and Lucy noted that, in the first few months on the job, she had nightmares about making errors in compliance procedures.

Lucy's second priority each day is to deal with glitches encountered in the office's use of Department of Education financial aid software. For better or worse, that software and the lifeline it provides to federal financial aid sources are the keys to the office's successful operation. At times, Lucy related, dealing with these problems took a great deal of time:

> When we run into a problem, which tends to be fairly frequently, with the software. . . that thing has to be my priority, to figure out what's going on, because that's how we receive student information, and that's how we transmit information to the Department of Education.

Her third area of activity is planning ahead for the office's operation. Although she has been in her position only a short time, as each semester has ended, she has thought of ways to improve the office's operation, and has begun work on a procedure manual for the office, something that has not existed there before.

Although her schedule already seems very full, splitting of her time three ways between staff (50%), students (25%), and staff or administrators elsewhere on campus (25%), Lucy stated that she would like to spend more time in the community giving talks about financial aid opportunities to high school students and their parents. Surely her fluency in Spanish would be an asset to her in the diverse community served by her college. As she told me, outreach efforts can be an important vehicle for enrolling greater numbers of first generation students in college:

> That's something that I think I will enjoy more than a lot of the processing aspects of the job, is going out to high schools and trying to make the students and their parents more aware of the financial aid that's available for them—not only at this school, but just in general, because many of the students in this community come from families where they will be the first one going to college, and they don't really know what opportunities are available.

In general, Lucy described her work so far at her college as "a growth experience" in a "friendly, collegial environment."

Marcia. Marcia has worked for the past ten years in her position specializing in programming in the student activities at her community college, and she actually held other

part-time and clerical positions in student activities at the college before that. She holds a master's degree in education and has worked with the same director of student activities for 20 years. Marcia expressed pleasure that her job had been able to change with the demands of the student body and the needs of her family. She related:

> As the years went by and the children were older, I had more time. Programming is a job that requires weekends, evenings, odd hours. So at the point where my job required that, my children were grown, and so the job has really moved along with me. I've been really lucky in that way.

Her main job duty is working with the college's program board, a body of student representatives who plan activities on the campus throughout the year, which includes contact with an enormous variety of tasks and people. When asked to describe her work, Marcia said:

> I'm the advisor to the activities program board. So I work with a group of students which means at the end of every year, or at the end of semesters, whenever it's necessary, I'm out recruiting students to be involved in program board. The meeting is then on a weekly basis to involve them in the selection of programs, the promotion of programs, and actually putting programs on. So there is a lot of direct work with the students.

Her role is also "behind-the-scenes" in nature, as she is the person responsible for establishing contracts with speakers and entertainers who come to the college.

This seasoned veteran of community college student activities was well aware of the challenges faced by those who work with a student body which is definitely not a "captive audience." Since the college's commuter population of students includes students who may attend for a few semesters and then stop out or transfer, and students who have myriad other responsibilities in their lives, Marcia is always on the lookout for students who would enjoy--and benefit from--working on the programming board. She said that she works mostly with traditional-aged college students, and that she also helps them make a transition to young adulthood:

> They're actually in a transitional period of their development where they kinda come in the office calling us Mrs. [name], and Mr. [name], and we're saying, "You can call me [first name]," and they're a little bit like somewhere between a child and an adult themselves. They still have that school thing where they call everybody that, and they're still finding their

> own balance in terms of, you know, "I really am maturing as an adult myself and these people are going to treat me as an adult." So there's that working with them, that, "You know, you're an important person around here and then when you go into an office, and talk with someone, you can expect that from someone as long as you behave that way."

Marcia believes very strongly in the unwritten curriculum and the learning opportunities afforded students by their involvement in student activities. She described her work with students as win-win: the students help keep Marcia's outlook young, and she still continues to learn from them each year, while they experience personal growth and the kind of learning that will serve them well for a long time to come. She offered an example of how she learned to withhold judgment on students based on their appearance:

> So we have a radio station manager right now who has an ear full of earrings and you know, we have radio kids whose hair changes every week. . . . You sometimes have that initial reaction of, "Oh, are we stuck with this this semester?" By golly, you go throughout the semester and you realize that kid is really learning and trying and has some good ideas. That you know, you just kind of looked at him and thought because he had green hair he wasn't necessarily a smart person?

All in all, it was the varied interactions with people that made Marcia's work fulfilling. She remarked, "I've learned so much about how to work with people and how to get along with people."

Campus/Community Relations

Don. For the past seven years, Don has been in charge of campus police at his community college, a position he took after several years working on a major metropolitan police force and then in private security. He holds a master's degree in criminal justice. Compared to his past professional experience, Don said his current job was much less stressful:

> To me, it seems this is easy work. Compared to what I came from and what I did, this is a piece of cake. . . . This is more like a PR environment, you know, you've got to be able to deal with the teachers, with the students, with the staff and make them feel comfortable, make them feel safe. This doesn't involve a lot of what you would call police work. . . . We get calls like, "I locked myself out." We're keeping track of how many teachers forget to bring their keys, and they can't get into their offices. We've got to go unlock their offices for them. I try telling them, "Why don't you just put that key on your keyring for your car, so it would be so

> easy.". . . And then, we handle, as a courtesy to the students, we do lockouts, people lock the keys in their cars, or they can't start their car, they leave their lights on and the battery's dead, so we do things like that. . . . It's babysitting these people, more or less. That's what it comes down to.

Don is also responsible for compiling crime statistics for the college, which are reported to the state and to the local community; he takes pride in the fact that they are quite low. He noted that crimes committed on campus are generally perpetrated by non-students. He found the college's students to be generally hard working and law abiding. He commented, "I admire them. They come in here, they're either paying for it themselves, maybe their parents are paying for it or they've got some kind of a loan, but they're here to get an education."

Don supervises the work of seven full-time campus police officers, four part time officers, three full-time dispatchers, and four part-time dispatchers. Someone from the campus safety office is working every day of the year, even when no one else is around. Don explained:

> This department is the only department that is here every day of the year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We're here all the time, and I feel we should have the best of everything, because people are constantly calling on us to do everything. We dispatch, let's say there is a leaky toilet or something. They call us, and we dispatch the physical plant people to fix it. This is like the hub over here, it really is.

Although his dispatchers handle a variety of situations and get the right persons to attend to them (including personnel who are not from public safety), Don has made strides in making it very clear to the college community the role of and appropriate tasks for his police officers. He offered an example:

> When I first got here, one of the officers got called. He says, "I've got to go to the [grocery store]." "For what?" I said. He said, "They ordered some cakes from the [store] and we've got to pick them up." I said, "What?" "Well, we always get sent for the Kolachkes or whatever." "No way. If they want to send somebody, let them send someone, or let them go themselves." . . . I can just see them coming in and saying, "Is the tray ready for the college?" (laughter) I mean, they delivered cookbooks for people. . . . Let's get our priorities straight, you know?

His efforts at professionalization of the department have paid off, and faculty and staff elsewhere on campus have come to look at Don and his colleagues as resource people on occasional personal matters related to the law. As Don told me, "They call on us. Sometimes we have somebody that's a little worried about a situation, and they'll come and ask for advice, and rather than go to their local police department, they come and talk to me about it." In recent years, Don has also been successful in building ties to the police departments of the neighboring communities, and "welcomes their presence on campus." He stated that he looked forward to trying more new ideas, and to continuing the positive relationship his department had with the campus and the local community: "If you're just going to stay still, you're going to become stagnant and you're not going to do any innovative things, you know?"

Margaret. Another specialist who provides services to people across campus and represents her college to the local community is Margaret, a professional in the development office at her community college for the past 13 years. Her background as an English teacher and her master's in adult education serve her well as she writes promotional materials for the college, in its efforts to secure the support of local individual and corporate donors. Margaret also works with committees of volunteers who help plan large-scale fundraising events. She described a typical day on the job:

> [This morning] I came in early to meet with the financial aid specialist, who'll write an invitation to the financial aid scholarship reception. . . . The foundation scholarship committee wants very much for the donors to meet the recipients, because they feel that will increase their giving and make them more inclined to pledge on a long term basis. . . . The next thing was interrupted by a big special event we're having next Saturday night, a cultural guild, which is a group of volunteers that I work with, who help raise money for the arts center. . . . It's an opening night gala of the arts center. We have about 200 people coming, and I'm responsible for everything behind the scenes, with the exception of one consultant on the fundraising to help me. Everything from table seating, tickets, raffle tickets, auction prizes, displays, menus, setup, and the meeting then at 9:00, we had to proof with the publications people the program advertisement book, and all the contents and the list of donors, and the table sponsors, make sure that was all accurate, to get that to the printer. . . . The next meeting was with the publications coordinator to finalize our annual giving solicitation packet, and how we change the theme each year to

> coordinate with the college. . . . And the scholarship booklet that we just wrote this year came out last night, so I just got a copy of that this morning. We have a foundation board meeting Monday night. . . . I do at least three reports for that, for the packet.

A key aspect of Margaret's work is matching the needs of various departments and programs on campus to the interests of potential donors. This involves knowing her college and its programs very well. As Margaret related, "I feel like a student writing a different term paper every month. I have to know just as much about an engine analyzer as I do about the National Theater of the Deaf coming and doing this performance in the arts center, or a literacy program for Hispanic families up in [town]." Margaret provided an example of her "matchmaking" role:

> [Company name] wants very badly to recruit our students to work for them part time. They will do anything. "What can we give you? We want more." So I wrote a proposal for this project. "No, we don't like it." Scholarships? "No, we don't like that." You just go through the hoops. Finally, they came, I sat down with them. [They said,] "We want to help students find jobs that can help pay for their education, tuition reimbursement, so that they don't miss out on all these opportunities in the work force because they can't, they're not eligible for the job because they haven't had the classes. So we want them to take classes." We got them to give us a quarter of a million dollars to fund a career services center.

The college's president is often the person who has the initial face-to-face contact with outside donor prospects. Margaret and her colleagues have the responsibility of preparing the president for these meetings, as she explained:

> We have to provide all the briefings. We have to write all the briefings, and have that in advance, and have it all scripted as to what he's going to say, and who on the foundation should go with him, if there's a door opener there. We have to—you don't dare walk in the door of [company name] with an appointment, without being able to tell them how many [company] employees are attending the college. There's a lot of work you need to do to say, you have to read the files. They may have a new manager over there. They may not know that you bought our [computer] equipment three years ago, and how much we love it. We have to know that. And we have to tell our president that.

All in all, Margaret expressed enjoyment of her work, although she stated that she sometimes felt "overworked and underpaid." She valued the relationships with people she had worked with over the years, including campus colleagues, donors, and volunteers.

She took pride in the accomplishments she had made in her work. Because of her background, she viewed fundraising for education as a good professional fit for her, even though it was stressful work at times. She emphasized, "If you didn't care, you wouldn't stay in this kind of work for very long."

Mark. Mark, an experienced business owner and manager with a master's in business administration (MBA), has worked for the past five years managing the center at his community college which provides consultation and training for businesses and municipalities in the college's district. He supervises the work of other professional staff who conduct training programs related to procurement and contracting, international trade, and development of small or new businesses. Mark also works with local communities on economic development projects. When asked to describe a typical day on the job, Mark offered the following:

> There are different hats that you wear in this job. . . . There's always conferences, always training activity, always something I've got going on. I have final budget responsibility for these things. Primarily, I come in and I take a look and see where the budgets are that day. Everything that I do here is grant. . . . I first get caught up on what projects [one center] is doing, and then we'll take a look at the partnerships that we're working on, both with police academy and [another center on campus], where those things are standing. The rest of the day, it will be spent pursuing partnerships we have with other community colleges, other people in my position. I serve as the president-elect for Illinois Community College Economic Development Association. So there's a lot of work that happens with that, and the Illinois Small Business Development Association, which all comes through here. . . . If personnel issues happen, they come to me. Those are the things that have to be dealt with. Training issues with the staff, where we want to go with it, what we want to do next. . . . We'd like to take some of our non-credit small business things, and offer them on the net instead of having people come here. So we've had to take staff and train them. . . . I would say probably half of my time is behind that desk, and the other half of my time I'm on the road. Going to other community colleges, state and federal agencies that we have contact with, maintaining relationships of that nature.

Mark's center, with its focus on local businesses and communities, differs significantly from the academic and career programs at his college. In our interview, Mark was well aware that the type of work he did was removed from what many might see as the college's core function:

> Our direction is along with the college, as you take a look at the college, say the things that are important to the college, economic development and community involvement are generally lower on the list than the rest of the functions the college does.

Mark was unique among the interviewees, in that he described his "customer" as follows:

> Our customers are the people who employ fewer than 25 people... Small businesses in the [county] region. Those are our customers. That's our primary goal, that's our primary purpose. Our secondary customer is the municipalities. Our tertiary would be our students who come to our seminars.

Mark expressed pride in the accomplishments of his center, despite the fact that he and his colleagues often felt that their work was not understood well by the rest of the college. As he told me:

> What I do here doesn't really get attention. You've got this dichotomy that's existing, from on the other side of the street and here, but then, it's a good life. You produce a product that you can put in your hand, and say, "Look, I did this. That building went up because I did this. These people work, because I did this," and when you're done, you can go home.

Referring to the improvements Mark and his colleagues have made since he became manager, Mark told me, "In that period of time, we became the business delivery angels of Illinois. This is what people came here [for], to see how they should set up their business centers at other colleges." When asked to describe the character of his experience working at his college, Mark offered the following comment: "It's been a very supportive institution. It has been supportive, it has been flexible, and it has been as challenging as I want to make it."

Academic Department Staff

Barb. The horticulture department at a community college has been a professional "home" to Barb for the last thirteen years. She manages the greenhouse and the floral shop in the department, a job which involves a wide variety of duties. Barb explained:

> We're doing a lot of different things. I'm involved with a lot of different committees on campus so I have several different committee meetings that require you to look presentable. And then I might be working in the greenhouse because we have a big shipment that came in that needs potting

> up or we got stuff that needs to get out of here. . . . Then there are people who come in, as with any Community College, walk-in people who need something right this minute or want to be counseled on what they should be taking in classes and how do they get in. . . . Then there is the service end down at the plant shop, where "I want flowers for such and such," and then when we're open, which we open next week. . . . Sometimes I'll be down there covering by myself because [student aides] won't be there, so I'll be making arrangements and waiting on customers and cashiering, and if they are not staff and don't know me, they think that that's my job. . . . In addition to that, there is the normal paperwork and ordering supplies all the time for instructors which they often need at the last minute.

Barb's work necessitates contacts with outside vendors, and occasional trips to pick up plants and supplies. Thriving on the variety in her job, Barb noted, "It's very different all the time. And it's fun."

Aside from Barb's ongoing work that keeps the horticulture department stocked and running throughout the year, there are also special events sponsored by the department in which Barb has a very important role. Barb described a few of these projects which had become "hers" over the years:

> If I have an idea, there is nobody else to see it through, so it's mine. So the Career Fair, I've kind of taken over doing that, and the Garden Walk is another thing that we host and it's connected with our perennial class but it's also a lot of that is administrative work for it, and the promotion of it, and getting the flyers and the booklets and coordinating people. That comes to me and that's a fun project to work on. Our Spring Sale is a huge event. Throughout the years it's gotten out of control. It's just of Annuals and Perennials and it's a one day kind of thing. . . . It's gotten huge, really huge. And that's something that I coordinate all year.

Part of coordinating these events is also publicizing them; Barb develops flyers and press releases that go out to the local community, and uses contacts she has developed over the years to make sure that articles get printed and word gets around. Barb holds a master's degree in education and worked with developmentally disabled adults prior to coming to the college. She has found enough flexibility in the job to "customize" the position to align with her own interests and skills. As she related:

> I had my background with developmentally disabled. I really liked that, so we have a class now in our program, Introduction to Hort Therapy and I'm the primary instructor for that. . . . I also have the skills in Floral Design and we have a floral shop down at the corner and so I get to structure that, teach students how to run a business kind of thing.

Barb works closely and smoothly with the small number of full-time faculty in her department, the numerous adjunct faculty, and the full-time greenhouse worker whom she supervises. In terms of whom she has the most contact with in her job, Barb stated that she interacted most with other staff and a few faculty in the college (including those in her own department), then the general public (especially through the floral shop and special events), then students (whom she supervises when they work in the greenhouse or shop and when they come into the department office with questions). The constant variety and changing "customer" whom she serves has kept Barb enthused about her work, even after thirteen years on the job. Commenting on her job specifically, and on life in the community college in general, she said, "Everybody always says how they don't like change but I kind of like it. Overall, it keeps you going, keeps you interested."

Betty. Betty is the professional staff member who is essentially the backbone of the nursing lab for a thriving community college nursing program. When I asked her to tell me about her work, she walked me around the recently renovated, state-of-the-art nursing education facility that she managed. One of her duties is making sure that simulation ("sim") labs are set up with all the supplies needed for the specific skill set that will be taught each day. Betty uses a complex schedule grid developed in cooperation with the teaching faculty to inform her of what modules are being taught each week; code numbers for each module refer her to a card in a card file box which lists exactly what supplies and equipment need to be on a cart and in one of the sim labs at a specific time. There are daytime and evening classes, and a part-time person helps make sure the evening labs are ready to go. Betty noted, "It's up to me to order all the supplies we need for the full year, to keep the labs going. As you can see, I need more space." She chuckled about this, and seemed to take in stride the responsibility for a large inventory of material. In order to save money, the department also re-uses supplies such as bandages and I.V. bags, because they

are used on mannequins and not real people; Betty supervises the student workers who do the repackaging and restocking of this material.

Although maintaining the lab supply inventory and making sure labs are set up each day are key responsibilities of hers, Betty estimated that "at least 75%" of her time is spent with students. She conducts a lab orientation for first semester students. Betty maintains contacts with the students throughout their time in the program, since she runs what is called the practice lab, an area of the department where students can come in and practice skills they have learned in the simulation labs or classrooms, under Betty's watchful eye. Betty takes pride in this lab, stating, "Actually, this lab is very unique--it's way ahead of its time. You won't ever find any nursing lab that's set up like this. . . . We all had a say in the planning of this lab."

The practice appointments made with students are called "appraisals," and it is Betty's job to give the students feedback on techniques at all levels and in all areas of the program's curriculum, such as handwashing, wound care, and tube feeding. Since Betty is not considered "faculty" at her college, she has to be careful about how she characterizes this work. (With a master's in health education and not nursing, Betty is ineligible for a faculty position in the nursing department.) She explained, "I really need sometimes more of a background than the faculty. . . . But again, I cannot say I'm teaching. That's why we say 'appraisals.'" Despite having to distinguish carefully between her work and that of the faculty, Betty felt comfortable with the relationship she had with them, because it helped her do her job well:

> I try to attend level meetings to get their input in new equipment we need, because things change out there. I really don't get out to the hospitals anymore like they do, and discuss how we can better set up for a lab, or something like that. So it's a give and take discussion.

What stands out most when one meets Betty is the value she places on her contact with students, and the fulfillment she gets from watching them develop as nursing professionals:

> I tell'em, it's just like watching children grow up, because they don't know anything at first level, and then they get a little more knowledge, and then it's so much fun at fourth level to see them pretty much accomplished and speaking the language, medical terminology that they were struggling over at first level.

Betty has been in the nursing profession since 1960. Although she loves her work, she looks forward to retiring soon, so that she can spend more time with her husband and do more alpine skiing. Working cheerfully, steadily, and reliably has been such a part of her life for so long, however, it is hard to imagine Betty slowing down. In fact, she told me with a laugh that she has numerous unused sick days accrued, partly because "it's always so much more work if I call in sick, than if I come in." When she does make the decision to retire, it won't be easy. "I'm perfectly happy in my job," Betty told me. "I'd rather be here than almost anywhere."

Willis. A contemporary of Betty's who also has a hard time imagining retirement, Willis is a staff member in a physical education department. He is responsible for managing all equipment and uniforms used in physical education classes and by the college's sports teams. His master's degree is in athletic management, and he has held this full-time position for 25 years. Initially, Willis's job included a component of athletic training as well, but early on, as the school's involvement in various sports grew, the trainer responsibilities were dropped and Willis focused mainly on equipment management. When I asked him to describe a typical day on the job, Willis pointed to various sets of uniforms and equipment located around his boiler room/laundry room "office" and said:

> My typical day is, Tuesday and Thursday is when they play all the games, and sometimes Saturday. Now the volleyball team has more stuff than you can imagine. . . . So I washed that all last night, put it in the dryer, hung them up, and they're dry. I've got them all separated and ready for the game today. So when they come in, I just give them their hanger and they take their equipment. . . . They're all marked by numbers. So then the soccer team is leaving for [town], and that's their uniforms right here. When they come in, I give them the uniforms. The coaches are good. They check it into me, and when they come back here at night, the uniforms are here. If I'm here, I'll wash them. I don't use the dryer. I try to drip dry'em, because I have to hang them anyhow, so I might as well hang them right from the washer. It actually saves me some time, and I don't have that

> much room. . . . Cross country's all done. I got them all ready to go for Saturday.

Another part of Willis's job which has increased in importance to him over the years is one that is probably not listed on his job description: his involvement in the college's athletic association. Throughout the year, this association raises funds to support the school's athletic teams, ensuring their participation in out-of-town tournaments and helping them to keep their equipment up-to-date. In his role as the booster club's biggest booster, Willis uses his organization abilities, knack for getting information, and interpersonal skills to plan fundraising events and cultivate relationships with potential donors in the community. He observed:

> Well, [people who support the athletic programs] are glad to do this for you. They're happy because it makes them feel good. That's the thing, how you can make them feel good. . . . I can go ask for things that normally people won't. It's the way you do it. . . . [My friend] taught me, you make people feel comfortable, and you make them—what's the word? If you ask them for a favor, you try to work it out that they are benefiting from doing you a favor.

One key fundraising tool used by the athletic association which keeps Willis busy is the series of grade school basketball tournaments held throughout the year, which earn money for the association through concessions and ticket sales, but which also promote a feeling of goodwill about the college in the community and expose youngsters to the campus. Willis explained how the tournaments were beneficial to all involved, including himself:

> I still miss [teaching elementary schoolchildren] to this day. But I get to work with them here, in the grade school tournament. . . . We run grade school tournaments for the community, and we do that to raise money to send these kids [college students] on these trips. We have 16 teams in each tournament, and nobody is eliminated. They just keep on playing. We do this on weekends when the gym is available, and we raise money from the concession stand, and from their [entry] fees. We get referees who are donated—some of them. We get the coaches here, and—we're going to Arizona—those coaches that are going to Arizona referee the games free, and that money they earn goes into their trip. . . . I have [the college athletes] in charge, we have officiating class here. We don't have them officiate. If we do, they officiate with two other people, because these coaches tend to get—these tournaments become very big and well known, so being in a [name] tournament is a big honor.

Willis has considered retiring, but can't imagine what else he would be doing. Showing me his copy of the book Making a Living without a Job, he notes, "I'm reading this thing. . . . Well, I'm doing that. Really, that's how I feel, I'm making a living without a job. I'm doing my hobby."

Instructional Support

Matthew. When Matthew began working at his college roughly 25 years ago, his department was probably not referred to as "educational technology" like it is now. Matthew is an audiovisual specialist whose job it is to support the work of the teaching faculty and administrators at the college. He described his work this way:

> I produce audiovisual materials for faculty and staff. That means that. . . if you wanted, say, slides out of that book, OK, I'd copy that and give you the slides. If you wanted audio tapes copied from language masters—whenever the instructor gets around to telling us, we'll make copies of those. . . there's duplicating videotapes, we do satellite stuff. We've got two dishes. . . and video production, lamination, dry mounting. It's sort of like anything that you might use—I could do overheads too, if you want. Any kind of thing you might use in the classroom. That, plus show people how to use stuff. Even some consulting, like if you wanted to buy a video camera, people come in and ask. . . plus maintain all this stuff.

Occasionally Matthew gets assistance from workers in the library, mostly for simple tasks such as duplicating prints, but generally, he does all the work himself. He noted, "It's a Ma and Pa shop, without Ma." In one day, the multiple demands on his time can be both interesting and dizzying. As he told me:

> It's always different, which is a good thing. Right now, I'm doing photography. A little while ago, I was doing video. Maybe a satellite thing to set up. Some months, I'll have 12 satellite things. October, there's nothing scheduled. Everything's always just sort of different. There's tasks that are similar, but you might have a bunch at this time, and then other times—it's almost like "feast or famine." I've had days when somebody comes and says, "Can you do this?" And while they're telling me, somebody else calls on the phone, and then another person walks in the door. You get all these people all at once, which is OK, because then you juggle it.

Although his master's degree--and his passion--is in photography, he has had to master the technology and production of various types of audiovisual media. Considering

the technological changes that have occurred in his field in the last 25 years, especially in the areas of videotaping and computers, this is no small task. He has also seen changes in demand for his services since the advent of desktop software that can be used by individuals elsewhere in the college to produce overheads and other A.V. materials for classroom presentations. He noted that he enjoyed learning new things related to his work, and was instrumental in pushing his college to purchase specific computer equipment he needed because of its graphics capability. There have been times, however, when he has perceived his institution as slow to respond to changes and upgrades in technology, and resistant to adding extra staff to his area to give him a hand.

Matthew sees himself as an artist at heart, and expressed his frustration when faculty and staff were willing to settle for "just anything," as long as they had a few slides or transparencies to show. "When people come down and say, 'I just want something...' I wind up doing it, because I've got a personal standard," he said. "You go ahead and put forth the effort to make a good product, whether they like it or not." The projects he seems to enjoy the most are those which allow him to use some creativity, such as annual public relations videos that highlight key events at the college. Matthew related how he livened up one annual video:

> They did one of these things where it was for United Way, and they had a jail, and a guy from security comes and other people in the community, and they've got their badges and they arrest the president, the vice president, all these people, and they've got a jail and people have to come up. I videotaped it. The first thing that came into my mind was, "Oh, I'll just put the 'Cops' [TV show] theme on it.

He added that there have been times when, valuing his employment, he has reined in his creativity a bit in order to not be too outrageous. While acknowledging that his college was not perfect, Matthew knew that a move to the corporate sector might mean less job security. As he put it, "So why [would] I want to try and go someplace where they'd downsize me?" he commented. "[I won't leave], as long as I can stay here and try to do stuff. You sort of carve a niche for yourself."

Stacy. Another professional staff member whose role supports the work of the faculty is Stacy, who has worked in the writing center at her college for the past six years. She described her job in this way:

> I'm in charge of the writing tutoring, that's the main thing. I also oversee tutoring in the social sciences as well and other communication arts classes. So that means the philosophy tutors, and foreign language tutors--those people also report to me. So first of all, I supervise on a daily basis. [I also] hire, along with the faculty member, the tutors. And I do all the scheduling of the tutors myself. I have 28 tutors that I have working for me this semester. That varies but it's usually always over 20 anyway. So I supervise the tutors, do on-site training, and I'm there so they can ask me questions and I also will do some tutoring myself. . . and then we do things like class presentations which could be more promotional, especially in the beginning of the semester.

Aside from coordinating the activities of the tutoring staff, Stacy keeps her hands in the work of the writing center by tutoring several students herself. She estimated that she spent about 35% of her time in direct student contact, and described a typical day as follows:

> It really varies a lot, depending on who shows up, who doesn't show up, and who calls. Really the students that come to me and the teachers who call me up can determine what I do during the day. But I'll come in and I'll probably have a bunch of phone calls to return and it's like I say, I spend maybe 35% of my time doing tutoring myself and then a good chunk of the time just talking with tutors and making sure their tutoring is going o.k. and their schedule is going okay. . . . I also always have 1-3 projects, such as developing handouts or updating the web page.

Stacy also has considerable contact with the faculty of the departments for which she hires tutors, and with other staff members of the learning assistance center where she works. Stacy works most closely with the English department faculty, one of whom is considered the "liaison" to the writing center and who assists in training writing tutors. She exercises considerable autonomy in her daily work, sometimes to such an extent that she wondered about the need for a faculty liaison in the first place:

> I will make the decisions for scheduling. I don't really consult anyone on that. I just figure out how many tutors are needed, when. . . and how much tutoring is appropriate in foreign languages. Same thing with the one-credit classes that I was telling you about. Those are kind of an interesting subject because the instructor is listed as the faculty coordinator, but he doesn't actually teach them. The tutors are the ones working with the

> students, so we're always the ones working with the students one on one. The faculty coordinator is listed as an instructor but the tutors are the ones who really do all the work for it. And usually I complete the grade reports at the end of each semester.

With a master's degree in writing, Stacy has also been called upon to act as a resource to the English department and the college's testing center, scoring writing placement tests when extra help is needed. Stacy provided an account of this aspect of her work:

> We have placement tests for the English classes and there's a computerized version and if a student wants to, if they weren't satisfied with their results from that test or they were borderline or whatever, their counselor may suggest they take a retest. Well, the retest is a reading-writing retest, which means that they read a whole essay and they write out some answers to reading questions and they write an essay, so you get a writing sample which obviously you can't put through the Scantron. . . . What happens is that a lot of the students are taking these tests between semesters because that's when they are interested in registering for classes. And none of the faculty are around between semesters so they had to find someone who had a master's degree who could step in and do such a thing when the faculty members aren't here, so that's why I ended up getting put through the training.

All in all, Stacy said she enjoyed the variety in her job, and the opportunities it offered to interact with people. She viewed her work as important to the community college's mission of serving a broad constituency of students, noting, "I think tutoring is a lot of what a community college is, what makes it different from a 4-year college. Because it goes along with accessibility."

Specific Student Populations

Emma. Most of the students whom Emma serves in her community college's district are not actually students of the college--but her goal is to make them want to be. At the time of the interview, she had been employed in the college's TRIO program for a little under a year, working with "students who, without any assistance, would probably be dropping out of school and start working, even before high school. . . low income, first generation groups within the county." Emma has a master's degree in counseling and has worked as a school counselor for over two decades. She described her job this way:

> Part of my job is also counseling, but it's not really all the time. There are times when it's advising, which is contradictory to counseling, but in academics, basically the whole idea is to make sure the students stay in school and don't drop out. So we go to high schools, we go to middle schools, and we identify students who are classified as low income, and first generation students. So these are the target students. And then, if they do qualify in the universities, we also help them, when they graduate out of high school, we help them, to the last detail—admissions procedures, financial aid, et cetera, until they are accepted in the universities. For those who would not be able to make it into universities, then they come to [this] College, and we still help them out, and make sure that if they do want to pursue a four-year college degree, that they could do that.

Each day, Emma reports in briefly to her supervisor, who is also based at the community college, to be advised of any special instruction or changes in plans that have come up. She spends the bulk of her day going out to junior high and high schools that have students in the program, checking on their progress, and monitoring tutoring arrangements that she has helped set up and funded with money from the grant. Occasionally her counseling skills are put to use, when she pulls out students who may be having difficulty of one kind or another, and meets with them one-on-one. In the previous academic year, she served approximately 250 students at five different schools in the college's district, but she expressed hope that the number of schools she served would be reduced to four this year, so that she could provide more individualized service to students. Besides helping at at-risk students finish junior high and high school, Emma also assesses their career aptitudes and interests and introduces them to different types of careers. She elaborated on this aspect of her work:

> For instance, my last activity last year was to bring them to the courthouse of the [name of city] area. So I brought them to the courthouse, and they were allowed to watch the court proceedings, and the judge, after the court proceeding, spoke to the students. So those are the things that I do. And in some cases, we bring them to hospitals, so they can observe the doctors. . . We expose them to everything. So sometimes we have career days, where we get them out of their middle school, bring them over to [this college], and then let them meet the—like, last summer, we let them meet the CAD people, computer assisted design people. We bring them over to our health departments, we bring them over to the automotive department. So regardless of whether the child is inclined to that or not, we leave them the option, "Would you like to come along?" To expose them to everything. Automotive, health, law, medicine, whatever. Give them some variations.

Emma said she spent 70-80% of her time on the job in direct student contact, and felt a sense of calling to her work; when commenting on the career path that brought her to this job, she stated, "I operate on divine providence. . . . I go where I am needed." As a Filipino American, Emma viewed education as a powerful tool for success and independence in life, especially for the minority students she serves. Speaking of the fulfillment that she and her colleagues experienced working with at-risk youth, Emma told me, "People know why they're here, or they go beyond their work in terms of the 'pay' they get. . . . It's nice to come to work and know that you are needed."

Frank. Frank also focused on the pre-college population, managing the youth education division of his college. "[I'm] in charge of teens on campus, kids on campus, talent search, scholars' academy, and then all of the little programs that fall under those headings," he said. "I have people reporting to me who coordinate those areas." Regarding the role that his center plays in the education of local youth, Frank told me, "There are gaps in the school experience; one of them is that certain subjects aren't offered and kids are interested in them, and certain things are artificially timed. . . . We fill in those gaps." Frank described his position as a "semi-administrative job, because I'm working with budgeting and policy making and forms and stuff like that, and then also the nitty gritty things about finding rooms." When asked what a "typical day" on the job was like, Frank answered:

> A typical day would be a series of interruptions (laughs); that's a typical day. A lot of phone calls, people interested in getting into courses that there's no room for them anymore, and they try to get your permission. It's working with instructors, hiring instructors, reviewing instructors; that takes quite a bit of time, especially in the summer. Right now, I'm doing a lot of evaluations of programs--that are in a stack two feet high of all the evaluations from how many classes we had this summer--and weeding through those to see what students thought of the courses and giving feedback to the instructors. . . . It really is a seasonal job; it's not the same every day, and it's not the same every quarter.

According to Frank, such variety kept his job interesting. Frank described his work as "just as exciting as working in an ER," noting that he shifted constantly from one focus to another and "never [got] anything done in a linear fashion."

Frank started working at the college with a master's degree in education, but earned a doctorate in curriculum and instruction while working in a previous position there. His knowledge of curriculum serves him well on the job, where he stays involved in each program's curriculum development:

> The other things I do [include] course development, thinking of new courses, working with instructors to get new courses up and going, and then course improvement. These evaluations I'm doing--if it says that [students] really could have used more time in the reading class with the high school kids or if an hour and a half wasn't enough, two hours would be better--we take a look at that and we see whether or not that would be a viable thing to do. Most of the course ideas either come from me or the coordinators, and then after that the instructors, and then after that the students.

In addition, Frank described how his dissertation research on intrinsic motivation had provided him with additional insight into the gifted and talented students served by the department, and had helped him frame questions he had about other students who are less motivated.

Frank acknowledged with a smile that people in other departments on campus were probably not fully aware of the size and scope of the youth programs at the college:

> Oh, heck, they don't even know how big the program is. It's always a surprise. . . they think that we have a few kids' classes, and they're aware that we make noise occasionally, you know, with the kids running down the hall and stuff like that, but they have no idea of the size of this program. We have a budget of over a million dollars a year just for my area. . . . Anything to do with kids, I will get the phone call, if people know enough that they have to call somebody about a kids' issue or a teens' issue, or public safety; if there's a problem with a lost kid, I'm the beeper that's going to go off eventually. If we have a program that. . . the math department wants to bring in kids for a math competition; they're probably going to end up talking to me sooner or later because they have to coordinate with our efforts. On and on like that. . . . We're very visible; they just don't know the extent of what we do. They don't know that, for instance, in the summertime we've taken every available room on this campus, and that's why they can't find rooms.

In our interview, Frank considered his possible career path in the future. Although he held a doctorate, he was not convinced that he'd want to officially become an administrator. "I'm sure there are other people who hate their job, but I like mine, and I'd hate to give that up just for more power," he remarked. "The flexibility and creativity afforded by this position are probably unparalleled in education."

Jeannette. As a professional staff member in her college's welfare-to-work program, Jeannette works with female public aid recipients, with the goal of getting them through short-term vocational programs and into jobs. She described her job as follows:

> I work with Public Aid, strictly Public Aid women, and we have two different grants to work with them. One is they have to be receiving cash [welfare], they must be receiving cash, and then we try to get them into short term vocational training programs. And then the other one, they don't have to, so we can get them into a GED class or the vocational training, and their tuition is paid for by another grant that we have. On my grant, we can give them fees and supportive services. . . . I'm constantly marketing the program. I send out letters or make up flyers or send flyers, fax them, I'll contact Public Aid and try to get people registered now for the fall classes. . . . We're really supposed to be trying to improve their skills at whatever jobs they're at. [That's] the theory behind it--so we can help them be more self-sufficient, get them totally off cash. They still get medical card and food stamps. . . . They come in and I assess them, their skills, what they want to do and then we talk about—well, if they know what they want to do, then I will try to work with it, like getting them some kind of career path. We get them registered in the classes, get them their books, whatever it is they need, set up a file for them so we can arrange for their fees. They have to have an attendance sheet, and I have to keep an enormous amount of documentation on what they do, and monthly reports.

Jeannette stated that she spent about 25-30% of her time in direct contact with students, with the rest of her time being divided among various activities on their behalf, such as paperwork, program development, and liaison-type work with other departments and programs on campus. Jeannette told me that she is viewed as a "point person" on matters related to the welfare-to-work population at her college and in the local community.

During her interview, Jeannette stressed that at the heart of her work was an attunement to the population she worked with, and the many obstacles they faced in completing educational goals. She offered an example:

> They may start the classes and then their babysitters will quit and then they're stuck. They have a lot of barriers, enormous barriers, to continuing in these training programs. Or there's a family crisis and they don't come. Something happened to a relative and they have to go help them. They have to leave town or. . . their cars don't run very well, and they don't have insurance or something and they can't keep their cars. So it's a lot, after you recruit them, then I mean, I have to work on the retention.

In some ways, Jeannette said the case management aspect of her job was a bit more than she had bargained for, since the job was initially listed as being more focused on job placement, and then changed with the acquisition of a particular grant. Jeannette holds a master's degree in adult education and has years of experience working with adult learners. When asked how she identified herself professionally, Jeannette replied:

> I'm an educator. This is a very—this is a lot of social services, this position. I really have not been trained in social work. . . . We needed to hire case managers for this particular grant. They sort of changed it on us. So I really see myself as an educator, you know, maybe developing courses or administering them, coordinating them, whatever program I'm in, I've usually been the coordinator.

Overall, Jeannette found her work rewarding, taking pride in the impact it had on the lives of economically disadvantaged women. She offered this final reflection on her work:

> I feel good when I can see that they're actually doing things and getting something out of it. It's made a difference in their lives, and they'll tell you, they'll write you and say, "If it weren't for you—" I can see, if it weren't for me here, some of these women, they wouldn't stay on. . . . That part is very gratifying.

Roy. With responsibility for coordinating services for "special populations" at his college, Roy can certainly attest to the multiple possible interpretations of such a term. For over five years, he has worked in a supervisory capacity, coordinating the work of several other staff members and volunteers. Roy described his position in this way:

> I'm the supervisor of the limited English proficiency specialist, the tutor training facilitator for the literacy program, the academics skills center, ESL specialists--that's a computer lab that provides independent study opportunities for really a wide range of students, ESL through GED, the two of those, and. . . we also have a paraprofessional who helps keep the lab running and fixing the computers, installing the software, doing some troubleshooting. . . . We are trying to see what we're going to do now that the learning assistance specialist, who's leaving tomorrow, how we're

> going to rearrange the services for that. . . . I know that we probably have 115-118 documented students, though, with various types of disabilities.

In this professional capacity, Roy has to keep up with developments in each "population," to ensure that his programs and staff are providing optimal service. For example, the school has seen increasing enrollment by students with learning disabilities in recent years, and the English as a Second Language program is the fastest growing program at the school.

In addition, the number of students attending the college who need developmental or remedial coursework has increased tremendously of late, and Roy is part of an institutional committee that has developed new placement test policies to ensure that students receive remediation early in their time at the college. With a master's degree in English, Roy was especially involved in the revision of the developmental English curriculum into two courses rather than one.

> Originally, we had one developmental English [course] which went from grammar, punctuation, paragraph development through the research paper, and it was getting to the point where it was just impossible to do all of that. The students have, you know, such limited background knowledge and such limited experience doing, first of all, writing, and having not done research papers, that it was just too much to cover. So, that was divided into the first developmental English as grammar, punctuation, and paragraph development. The second course concentrates on essay development and, in particular, the five-paragraph essay, you know, structured essay. That way. . . by the time students are successfully completing those two courses, they're usually better prepared for ours.

Roy said that in his college and in his local community, many considered him knowledgeable about grant writing and reporting. Roy understood well the importance of grantsmanship in his position to his college; when asked to rate the importance of his work to the life of the college, he remarked:

> I would probably rate it eight, eight or nine [out of ten]. . . . Well, from a monetary perspective, some of our biggest grants are the adult ed grants, and the [name] community college grants, and so the work that I and others help put into that ends up representing quite a lot of money each year, and so I think that funds a lot of programs, helps a lot of students. I think that's an important aspect.

Since his department has received several grants, including a community literacy grant, Roy was recently invited by a state agency to serve as a consultant to mentor community agencies who did not receive funding, to help them write successful grant applications in the next grant cycle.

In addition to his other responsibilities, Roy noted that he taught regular literacy volunteer training sessions, and served as faculty advisor for the student newspaper, a position he has held for most of his tenure as a full-time employee at the college. All in all, Roy imagined his institution as a "department store" of sorts, which provided "something for everybody." He saw himself and his colleagues as "custom fabrication specialists." He clarified this characterization as follows:

> The custom fabrication, I guess, would be. . . as people come in, we try and define the appropriate place for them to begin their education. . . . What we're trying to do is to set up a program that meets the needs and desires of the students, so it's individualized, I would say.

Students are not the only ones who stand to gain from this "custom fabrication" work. When asked to characterize his work at the college, Roy had this to say: "[It's been] enlightening, in the sense that I've learned new skills and applied my old skills in new ways. . . . [It's been] rewarding. I think I've helped students achieve their goals."

Ted. In Ted's case, the word "special" had a narrower meaning than it did in Roy's job description; the population of "special needs" students he served at his college consisted exclusively of students with disabilities. Ted offered this perspective on his job responsibilities:

> My job is to provide support services for disabled students, so that includes all the disabilities, and it's meeting with them to give them an orientation about the school, doing some academic advisement, deciding with them what academic support they're going to need, and then I set it up. It can be finding notetakers for them, or it could be handling difficulty when there's a clash between an instructor and a student. [Then] I'm called in to resolve the problem. I do have some help. I have an LD specialist who's part time, and basically she does a lot of tutoring of our LD students. And then I have a 20-hour assistant, who helps find notetakers and does some tutoring. But finding interpreters, meeting with the students, that's what I do.

The "typical day" Ted described to me included a phone call with a dissatisfied spouse of a student with a severe physical disability, a meeting with a mentally ill student who was experiencing difficulty in his classes, and some tutoring of students who might be too challenging for the tutors Ted supervises. "I usually do the students who are very low functioning. I don't think it's fair to give them to the other tutors, who don't have much background in it. Students with mental illness, students who are EMH (educably mentally handicapped), I work with them." Ted continues to outline his "typical day" as follows:

> There are desks for wheelchair students. They have wheels, and we don't have enough to just leave them everywhere, so I have to move them. So I did that. . . . We have scooters for students, I charged those that day also. . . . And then I met with [an] instructor because she didn't know how to work with this blind student. We discussed some options. Just brailling some of the information, getting information early enough. . . . It's done by computer, so I type a lot of it in, and then it's brailled. . . . And then, probably, late that afternoon, I did some taping. We tape the textbooks [for blind students]. I did some of that also. So that was my day.

With master's degrees in both learning disabilities and counseling, Ted is well-qualified for the range of responsibilities he holds. In fact, Ted pointed out that some of the functions of his job were remarkably similar to those of the college's counselors, who are full-time faculty. This was somewhat of a sore point for Ted, who said he had to be "careful" about how he characterized his individual, non-tutoring contacts with students:

> One of the things that we're looking at right now is I cross the line a lot, into the counseling area. But they don't want to, they can't say I do "counseling," because I'm not faculty. . . . So even though they refer students to me for counseling when students don't know what they want to do careerwise, what classes should they be taking, if they have a disability, they're referred to me. They're supposed to be doing that in counseling.

Ted noted that he was currently working on having his position re-evaluated, for either an upgrade or a reassignment to faculty status.

Ted expressed concern that having such a variety of job duties, some of which were more visible than others on campus, might lead some individuals to have an inaccurate idea of just what his job was, and what his credentials were. Ted provided an example of the

type of puzzlement that may occur on the part of faculty who see him performing such a wide range of tasks:

> I had a student who threatened an instructor, and they got into this big screaming match, and I was the one who was called to mediate this argument and work it out, and then, actually, while I was doing it, I was thinking, "This instructor did see me, just a few hours ago, moving desks, and here I am doing this." So I think that instructor respected what I did, because we resolved it, but I think there's just such a broad range of what we have to do that I think a lot of people have a hard time. If they only see me pushing desks, that's what they think I do.

Ted had his own way of gently setting people straight about his role, and appeared to take such ambiguity in stride. What he cared most about was serving students, which, to him, meant doing whatever was necessary to get the job done. "I think the students are what is important, " Ted stated, "and I think we make a difference in the students that we work with."

Analytical Observations about Staff Work

It is unfortunate that the preceding vignettes were subject to the limitations inherent in written depictions of anything--namely, that they had to proceed in a linear, page-by-page fashion, one after another. To me, conceptually, the individual portraits look more like the squares of a two-dimensional quilt, juxtaposed in a large rectangle or other shape, connected by a common thread, but each unique in its own right. Together, these squares can be thought to illustrate a whole entity, or a large part of it, at least--that entity being the turn-of-the-century community college. Of course, not every existing professional staff type is represented herein, but the eighteen individuals selected help to provide a more accurate picture of what community colleges are and what they do than studies of faculty activity alone. A consideration of the daily activities and priorities of these master's prepared professional staff members yields seven important themes related to the nature of their work-- themes which might indeed add an underlayering, or a third dimension, to this community college "quilt." These themes include supervisory responsibility, fiscal

responsibility, involvement in teaching, scholarship, awareness of broader community college issues, misperceptions created by the nature of some job tasks, and the community college as a desirable work environment.

Supervisory Responsibility

Roughly half of the specialists interviewed cited some responsibility for supervising the work of others. In many cases, these supervisory activities were conducted in addition to seeing students, developing programs and events, and collaborating with other staff and faculty on specific projects. Themes that emerged related to the topic of supervision included: responsibility for several subordinates, small departments that served large customer bases, and management styles that were collegial and flexible.

Supervising several employees. A small number of study participants had the distinction of being responsible for the hiring and supervision of several other employees who were part-time, full-time, or a collective combination of both. For sheer numbers, Stacy, the writing center specialist, supervised the most people, since she oversaw the work of 28 writing, social science, and communication arts tutors. With input from faculty, Stacy hired and scheduled the tutors, trained them, and was available during the work day as questions and problems arose. Another individual who had several names on her supervisory roster was Angie, who coordinated the efforts of 12 part-time academic advisors in the advisement center at her college. These advisors were considered adjunct faculty.

Frank, Mark, and Don also supervised a combination of full- and part-time employees. In Mark's case, some of the staff he supervised had master's degrees themselves. He had a great deal of respect for the work done by his supervisees, and had tried to get some of their positions upgraded in the college's classification system.

Small but mighty. "Small but mighty" emerged as a theme for a few of the departments supervised by interviewees whose purview included small numbers of staff with large numbers of clientele. For example, Roy coordinated the activities of five to

seven staff members who each had responsibility for one of the "special populations" programs (or clerical or technical duties related to these areas). In fact, at the time of our interview, he was planning to meet with his staff to discuss how they might cover the responsibilities of the learning disability specialist who was leaving her job that week. Lucy, who coordinated financial aid services at her college, shared the student caseload evenly with two other full time staff members, and the three of them together served all the school's financial aid applicants. Ted supervised the work of two part-time staff who helped him contract with tutors, interpreters, and notetakers, who would make educational access possible for hundreds of students with disabilities at his college.

Collegiality and flexibility. Several of the interviewees who had supervisory responsibilities described their styles of management in their offices as being collegial and flexible. At the heart of this approach was the desire to treat co-workers with respect for the knowledge and expertise they brought to the job. For example, since Lucy was new to her job, she relied heavily upon--and respected--the experience of her two staff colleagues. She described her collegial approach to management in this way:

> I always discuss things with the staff, with everybody here, when we're going to make changes, and we evaluate how it works, and see whether a change will be made or not. . . . It's what's good for all of us. Since we're all doing the same work, we all have ideas, and I've actually been here the shortest of everybody, so I'm usually not the one to come up with the new ideas for how to do things. It's the two full-time people that have been here longer that have a lot of good ideas.

Some of the supervisors spoke of offering to their staff the flexibility they experienced in their own work. For instance, Mark, a business institute professional, remarked, "We're big believers in flex time here." Frank, who supervised coordinators of at least four programs designed to bring pre-college-age children onto campus (as well as numerous teachers who taught in the programs), suggested that such flexibility might be the key to employee loyalty:

> The other coordinators, it's a really flexible job, you know. . . just as long as the job gets done. So, there's not a time clock here. . . . I think they like working here, because they've done it now for a while. It used to be that

> the average length of time you could survive this job was about a year (laughs). You'd learn the job and then you'd decide, "Well, I've got to be moving on." Now the people that are working for me have been here for two, and going on three or four, years, so they're the right people for the position. And it is a good fit.

Fiscal Responsibilities

Most of the study participants either did not mention responsibility for money and budgets, or made comments similar to Ted, a disability services coordinator, who said, "I don't have much to do with the budget." Approximately one third of the interviewees, however, had important fiscal responsibilities as part of their jobs--either managing large budgets that included several programs, purchasing large dollar amounts of supplies for their departments, writing grants and other proposals that brought in outside money, or dispersing government funds to students appropriately.

Managing large budgets. The first category included Frank, who coordinated the efforts of several programs aimed at pre-college age students. The activities of his department were funded by a combination of grant money and the tuition charged to students attending classes; Frank noted that the youth programs were "a cost recovery program, so whatever it costs us to offer this thing. . . . We just divide that by the number of students we feel is a reasonable break-even." While this approach sounds simple enough, Frank remarked that others at the institution were probably not aware of the tens of thousands of youth they served annually and the subsequent budget he had to craft and administer each year: "They have no idea of the size of this program. We have a budget of over a million dollars a year just for my area."

In much the same vein, Mark, the business and economic development professional who oversaw educational programs and consulting relationships between his college and the local business community, also had significant budgeting responsibilities. As he told me, "One of the things that makes [this center] unique is the size of the grants we're awarded. . . . My budget here is about $750,000 a year." As a person with an MBA, Mark

felt very well-qualified to work with this large budget; in fact, he expressed his frustration when others in the college did not appreciate his business savvy and financial acumen:

> When I speak to administrators on the budgetary level, and I start talking about financial planning, I might as well be talking Greek. Unless I'm talking to the finance director, or people in the finance department, I cannot make a monetary case. . . . It becomes very difficult, then, not to want to hit them.

Purchasing duties. Barb, the horticultural manager at her college, had significant purchasing responsibilities. As she put it: "I work a lot with outside vendors. Between the greenhouse and the shop and the classroom needs, I do a lot." Noting that she had "almost total" signature authority for departmental purchasing, Barb said that she frequently put a faculty name or the department head's name on her orders, so that they could also be called to answer questions. Similarly, Betty, a nursing lab supervisor, was responsible for keeping classes and labs well-stocked with supplies to support teaching and learning needs.

Grantsmanship. While staff interviewees such as Mark and Frank mentioned grants as one part of the large budgets they managed, other participants were heavily involved in the preparation and acquisition of outside funding via grants and other types of proposals. Roy, who coordinated the work of several managers of programs serving the college's "special populations," elaborated on this facet of his work:

> I work with deans of the various units--transfer studies, career programs, and continuing ed, either preparing reports for the ICCB, Illinois State Board of Education, and various other reports, the Perkins Grant. I also help write those grants. . . the report for Perkins. . . was more of a year-end report. The dean handled the career programs; he handled the day-to-day reporting for that, and I'm usually involved in the writing of the ISBE grants. . . . So really, most of the grants here, I'm involved in, either writing or reporting.

Government fund administration. The administration and stewardship of government funds was a final type of fiscal responsibility held by some interviewees in this study. Although other individuals worked with government funding sources through grants, two specialists in particular were responsible for disseminating government dollars

directly to students in their programs. One was Lucy, the financial aid coordinator at her college. New to her job, she was still somewhat awed by the onus placed on her as the office's manager and the college's representative to government financial aid agencies:

> In the beginning, I really spent a lot of time worrying about, you know, I have to send in reports to the Department of Education saying that, if any of this information is false, you could be jailed for ten years. (chuckles) I'd look at things and go, "Oh my god! I don't want to sign my name on that." I'm not fabricating anything, you know, but what if I made a mistake?

Jeannette, who worked with her college's welfare-to-work program, also spoke about the authority and responsibility she had to disseminate government funds. Women enrolled in either of the two main grant programs she administered were eligible to receive reimbursement for school- or work-related expenses, such as childcare, books, supplies, special clothing, and transportation. It was Jeannette's responsibility to oversee the distribution of these funds, and to ensure that they were being used for their proper purpose. The actual release (by sponsoring agencies) of funds to Jeannette's college was outcomes-based, as she explained to me:

> If we do not get people either enrolled in the program, completing a program, or getting a job, we do not receive any reimbursement from the state. . . . If I have worked with 20 women and they drop out of the program after three times, then we don't receive any reimbursement.

Clearly, fiscal responsibilities were a key aspect of Jeannette's multi-layered specialist work.

Involvement in Teaching

The professional staff interviewed for this study were aware that they were targeted for participation because they held master's degrees, the educational credential held by the majority of community college faculty. The interviewees reported varying degrees of interest and involvement in teaching at their colleges. Some had been afforded opportunities to teach courses, and a few had even developed new courses. There were a small number of specialists who had been frustrated in their desire to teach, and others who simply weren't interested in teaching at present.

Adjunct teaching. Even though none of the job descriptions of the specialists I interviewed officially included classroom teaching, several interviewees indicated that they taught courses at their respective community colleges. For example, Stacy, a writing center specialist, and Roy, a special populations manager, taught English composition when section coverage was needed at their colleges (Roy usually taught at the developmental level). Both indicated that they chose to teach on an overload basis and on their own time; Roy taught on his lunch hour three days a week, and Stacy stated that she made up any hours that she spent teaching, since it was not part of her regular job. Ted, the specialist in disability access, also taught occasionally in his college's GED program. He saw this as part of the many opportunities he had had to work in different departments and to grow as a professional.

Course development. There were other specialists interviewed who not only taught courses, but also were provided opportunities to develop new courses of their own. All assessed their experiences with this favorably, emphasizing how they found new course development stimulating and satisfying. To illustrate, Don, the campus police chief, regularly taught a course in his college's criminal justice program each semester and had recently developed, with a local police sergeant, a new course for the program entitled "Organized and Non-Traditional Criminal Enterprises." Don elaborated on the team nature of the course:

> [Another adjunct] taught some and I taught some. He taught organized crime and motorcycle gangs, and I taught cults, Satanism, serial killers. That was one of the most interesting courses I have ever taught, and I'd like to get back to teaching it. It was fun to put together. I had a wealth of information of the subject. . . . It had to be approved [by the state], and it did get approved. . . . I tell you, that course filled up. . . . And you didn't find anybody falling asleep either. . . . It was an interesting course, and I was able to attain a lot of information. I called on a lot of my friends from the police department, and I had actual cases, actual pictures of homicides and things like that. The kids just loved that course.

Ben, a leadership specialist in student activities, also developed and taught a unique course, which he clearly found professionally rewarding:

> I love teaching, and I have a passion for teaching. People like to sign up for my classes. I'm doing a leadership class, based on the Great Books. I use the Great Books, and film, and things like that. Lots of people sign up. It's different, and I love teaching that way. Critical thinking is an important piece, and if you can get some value from something like the Great Books, then you have to be able to think critically, in order to apply the Great Books to leadership.

Other specialists who had developed and taught courses at their colleges included Barb, who drew upon her horticultural expertise and her experiences working with people with developmental disabilities in a horticultural therapy course, and Angie, who worked with colleagues to develop a for-credit peer mentoring class which developed students' leadership skills and provided trained students to work in a new orientation program.

Thwarted desires. There were a few individuals studied however, who strongly desired to teach at their colleges but had not been afforded the opportunity to do so. Betty, the nursing lab specialist who was reminded that her hands-on skill work with students in the lab was "appraising" and not teaching, found that with a master's degree in health education instead of nursing, she was not permitted to teach in her school's nursing program, even as an adjunct. Betty actually seemed to take this in stride, but Matthew, who had pursued his master's with teaching in mind, felt stymied in his efforts to teach part time at his college. In his first several years on the job, he taught part time in the art department, but had not been asked to teach again after a major disagreement with a student. Like Betty, he now felt that he had the "wrong" degree to teach in the department (M.S. in design and not a Master's of Fine Arts). Much to his happiness, he found that this distinction did not matter at another nearby community college, where he currently taught photography on weekends and enjoyed it considerably.

Even having the right degree, however, did not always guarantee a teaching opportunity for the specialists interviewed for this study. Mark, a professional who oversaw small business and economic development programs at his college, told me that while he had an MBA degree, just like the faculty in the business department at his institution, he felt the stigma of his "staff" designation when teaching opportunities

surfaced. "[I] would love to go across the street and teach," he said, "but that will never happen." He explained:

> We're the ones doing it [working with businesses], and if you take a look at a faculty roster over there, business faculty—they've got MBA's. That's all they've got are MBA's. A couple of them have some PhD's here and there, but probably your deans, your associate deans. But most of them have MBA's. We won't even be considered. We're classified [staff]. . . . We have some exceptions. We have one business faculty who appreciates what we do over here. [Name 1] gets to teach part of an entrepreneurial simulation class, because he developed the class. [Name 2] gets to teach one class a year in international trade. . . . I've been an entrepreneur, I've been there. . . . But these are not considered, because faculty, "Well, where did you teach last?" It doesn't matter. And when we talk to faculty and say, "Well, you know, we conduct seminars." "Oh, those are non-credit seminars."

No, thank you. There were a small number of interviewees who were not that interested in teaching at their colleges, in large measure because they felt they had plenty to do and were not interested in putting in the extra time, or because they genuinely found their work satisfying. For instance, Margaret, a busy development specialist whose writing skills were put to good use penning grant proposals and other promotional materials for her college's foundation, felt she already used her academic credentials in English and adult education quite a bit, remarking, "I have thought that if I retired from full time and wanted to keep my finger in, I could probably teach part time English." Another person who seemed uninterested in teaching for his department, physical education, was Willis. Between his work managing equipment, hustling donations, and planning events for the college's athletic association, teaching was not high on his list of priorities.

Scholarship

For lack of a better term, the word "scholarship" in this subsection refers to involvement by professional staff members in non-classroom activities involving knowledge generation and dissemination, such as research, writing, and conference presentations. Several of the professional staff members interviewed for this study indicated that they were active in generating new knowledge in their fields and/or sharing this knowledge by writing or presenting it to others.

Doctoral study. Not altogether surprisingly, two of the individuals who had conducted research recently and had a current "research agenda" were people who had involvement in doctoral education. One was Frank, who had already completed his doctorate in curriculum and instruction while working in the youth education area of his college. In fact, subjects for his dissertation study on intrinsic motivation were students in programs under his purview. Frank saw himself someday working in a university setting, where he hoped to combine his love of youth and his interest in research:

> I have lots of experience working with that age group, and what their needs are and their interests, and they're fun to work with--or probably [I could be] a faculty person teaching and doing some research. The research part intrigues me. [This college] is not a research facility, so it wouldn't go over very well, but I like to involve students in doing research and how it's done. It's the creative thinking, and you're finding out stuff you weren't quite sure about before, or finding out that it wasn't the way you thought it was.

Ben was also interested in research, and was completing a doctorate in educational leadership when I interviewed him. Ben had found plenty of fodder for research projects and papers around his own institution--and not necessarily in his own department. For example, for one of his doctoral courses Ben was working on a strategic plan for the college's service learning program and, in a previous course, he had conducted a study of the college's professional development program.

Research as a job duty. One specialist I interviewed stated that ongoing research was part of her job duties. Beth, a testing specialist, conducted survey research every semester on students who were dropping a class or withdrawing from school entirely. Her written reports included statistical and qualitative (open-ended response) data, and were shared with staff in her department and with administrators in areas of the college on which the findings could have an impact, such as student affairs and specific academic departments. The qualitative responses, Beth felt, provided valuable insights into barriers that some students faced in completing their education, and could help the college improve its retention-oriented services and programs.

Conference presentations. Another scholarly activity that some master's level professional staff members participated in was making conference presentations in their professional organizations or in the local community. In the case of Angie, the academic advising manager, her department's innovative programming and services in the area of academic advising had often been the topic of presentations she had made at conferences. One example was her presentation at the National Orientation Directors' Association conference. As she told me: "I felt we should be a leader in orientation or how we bring students into the college. So I felt it was important for us to develop a program and. . . let other people know that our program existed." Along these same lines, Ted, a disability access manager, said he had shared his expertise with others on the state and local levels. As he put it: " I do a few presentations elsewhere, though, and I do go out and give quite a few 'talks.'" Clearly, several of the specialists I interviewed valued the discovery of new knowledge and the sharing of their expertise with others.

Awareness of Broader Community College Issues

The specialists who participated in this study were acutely aware of broader issues related to present day community colleges, particularly in relation to four main areas: mission, customer service, changing demographics, and upcoming retirements. Their awareness of these issues was important because it had effects on their daily work and, for some, it was reflected in the nature of the work they did.

Mission. First, in relation to mission, many interviewees saw their work as part of a broader institutional effort to serve a variety of constituencies in the local community. For instance, two interviewees who worked with specific student populations definitely envisioned their colleges this way. Roy, a manager of services for special populations, likened his college to "a department store that can help most people by providing something for everybody." He added, "I mean, we have a lot of different services under one roof." Frank, who worked with pre-college age students, used a Disney World metaphor to describe his institution:

> You've got your Adventureland, and you've got your Tomorrowland and all those different lands, and Epcot and stuff like that, and they're somewhat separate from each other--like the ticket you buy for one isn't good at the other one--but they're all under the umbrella, and [this] College is like that, but it is a really unique and a nice place to work. It's kind of its own Magic Kingdom in that we have so many interesting perks here that I can't imagine anyplace else. . . . I'm sort of like in charge of, say, Adventureland at the teen level.

Participants often linked the work they did to what their college was trying to accomplish for its community, either by helping students navigate the system, working with specific student populations, supporting the teaching and learning process, or making the environment safe, well equipped, and pleasant. Margaret, the development office specialist, was articulate in describing her college's role in the community. She says:

> We truly believe this is the very first place that residents and businesses will come to for a quality education, as well as cultural enrichment. . . . What would this area be like if the college no longer existed? It would be a void in your life. . . . There's opportunities galore at any age, any level, and it's a service to the community.

Emma, too, envisioned such a mission, but as someone who worked with first-generation potential college students who might not otherwise set foot on the campus, she saw it as being linked to even broader societal improvement. By reaching out to underserved groups and offering "equal opportunity education," Emma asserted, community colleges could have an important role in breaking the "cycle of poverty," which was inexcusable in a wealthy country like America.

Having a sense that their individual work was linked to a broader institutional mission seemed to give participants a sense of purpose and a feeling that their work was important. This link between mission and importance affected specialist morale and "connectedness" to their institutions, and will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Six.

Customer service. The notion of serving a "customer" or clientele was a familiar one to most of the specialists studied; when asked who their "customers" were, most replied "the students," although some added other groups that they served, such as faculty,

administrators, and individuals or businesses in the community. Margaret expressed the views of many interviewed when she remarked:

> The ultimate customer is the student, obviously. Anyone who works here needs to be reminded that the student is the customer. And the community at large, because anybody who's a potential student—we serve almost a million people. So those are our constituents, those that are taking classes, and the ones who might come to take classes.

Participants in this study were very service-oriented, and each took pride in performing his or her work in a competent, professional manner. Many were well aware that their contacts with individuals had the power to changes lives. Lucy, a financial aid coordinator, talked about her plans to go out and talk to parents not only about financial aid, but about the fact that college could even be an option for their children. Don, a campus police chief, and Betty, a nursing lab specialist, spoke of running into former students now working in the law enforcement and nursing fields who told them how much their contact with them had made a difference in their career preparation. Emma shared a letter that a parent had written to her department, praising their work with pre-college youth, a line of which read, "It is true, people who let their light shine, unconsciously give others permission for others to do the same and thus, as they are liberated, they liberate others."

It should be noted that while the specialists studied knew who their customers were, a few sometimes wondered if their faculty and administrative colleagues viewed things the same way. Matthew commented wryly, "That's the reason the college is here. . . so the administrators can administrate, right? It's not here for the students. You know that. Faculty. It's here for whoever you're talking to." Mark, who worked with businesses and local communities and had very definite ideas about customer service, echoed Matthew's sentiments and wished community college people thought more like business people:

> One of the arguments I've gotten into in a marketing committee that I was on once upon a time, was "Who are our customers?" And I suggested that the students were our customers. You would think that the faculty, I had

> spit in their face. "How can you look at the students as customers?". . . "Customers" is too cold. Much too cold for an academic. Secondly, if you say "customers," that relates to "customer satisfaction." I'm sorry, but the committees that have gone nowhere the fastest have been those where we've put together to see, "Are we doing a good job teaching? Are our students satisfied?" You never want to be on those committees. . . . They don't have anything to be afraid of, but it is a cold business term. Again, it goes back to that separation. [Faculty think,] "That works in business, but not over here in academia."

Changing demographics. The third community college issue--in fact, higher education issue-- that staff were cognizant of was the changing demographic profile of their local communities and consequently, the population served by the college. This issue may be thought of as an amalgam of the first issue, community college mission, and the second issue, customers, in this way: if community colleges have a mission to serve a wide constituency and if professional staff often view the students as their customers, then the specifics of who these customers are cannot but affect the work of the specialists.

Interviewees highlighted two ways that demographics affected their work. The most obvious was when a specialist's *raison d'etre,* or main purpose in working at the college, was to serve a targeted group of students. Examples include, of course, all the staff in the "specific populations" category: Emma, who worked with at-risk junior high and high school students to get them envisioning college for themselves; Frank, who administered on-campus programs and classes aimed at the pre-college population; Jeannette, who recruited, enrolled, and retained female public aid recipients in career programs; Roy, who coordinated educational services and programs for students needing developmental coursework, English as a second language, and accommodations for disability; and Ted, who worked with the access needs of a variety of students with disabilities each day. These five individuals alone certainly provide an interesting window into just whom *fin-de-siecle* community colleges, and higher education institutions in general, serve today.

There was a second way that demographics affected specialist work. Aside from those who worked specifically with groups that are increasingly represented in today's

community college, there were also specialists who felt their work was definitely impacted by having to serve a population that was more ethnically, linguistically, and culturally varied. Ben, the student activities professional who worked with students on leadership development, spoke of some of the challenges he had experienced working with a diverse set of students:

> If you go to a multicultural institute, you, the secretary, you're the first person these people see. You'd better know how to act when an Indian student comes in. . . . And you don't know these things unless you learn them. Women, Muslim women and men, you don't touch them, and when they talk to you, they talk to you like this (shows expression). Muslim women will talk to me like this, because you can't look a man in the face. But if you don't know that, then you say, "These students, they're rude." And I heard that. I heard people say that. We have to be always sensitive to things like that, especially since there is a lot more diversity. We had a student training last year, and didn't have any vegetarian food. These Muslim students that are orthodox. . . didn't eat anything. We didn't have any food. So I had to think about that.

Don, a campus police chief, likewise said that changing student demographics had affected, in various ways, the nature of his work. For example, the Hispanic student population at his college had increased dramatically in recent years, and this included adult students who brought their children with them to campus and sometimes left them unattended. While acknowledging that the students' not hiring babysitters at home might reflect different cultural values and norms, Don and the campus safety staff were concerned about the safety of the children. He described how he was working to enhance the diversity (and communication abilities) of his staff:

> My department, I try to maintain diversity as much as I can. . . . I've got several female dispatchers and I've got several part time officers that are Hispanic, and a couple of full time officers that are Hispanic, which is a real help. You know, you've got people coming up there and I don't understand them. I can talk Polish... or [staff member in another department]. . . we're both Polish and we are at least able to communicate with these people. . . [me] not so much as he does, but at least I can understand what they're saying. So that helps.

The retirement wave. A final current issue in community colleges that professional staff spoke to was retirement trends among faculty and administration. The three community colleges profiled in this study faced (or were in the middle of facing) a wave of

faculty and administrative retirements in the next few years. While this topic was brought up by several interviewees in relation to other issues that will be addressed in Chapter Six, the piece that has bearing on this chapter's topic, staff work, was how they perceived retirements as affecting their everyday work. Some staff, such as Lucy, Don, and Beth, all of whom expressed ideas for innovation in their colleges, viewed the turnover among faculty and staff as an opportunity for change. As Lucy observed: "There are a lot of people who have been here 20, 30 years. I think maybe that sometimes makes it harder to change things." Don described his college in a similar way, "A lot of people. . . have been here a long period of time, and I guess maybe they're indoctrinated in one way of doing things. . . . We've gotten a lot of new faculty. . . . Maybe there will be some innovators among us." Beth looked ahead with positive anticipation, saying, "I'm excited about what might be happening in the near future here."

For others, the retirement of key administrators or faculty spelled frustration or uncertainty for them and their work. For example, Marcia, whose supervisor was retiring, wondered what would become of her department--and her position--once a successor was chosen. "I hope my role would not be diminished in any way," she remarked. Margaret spoke of the frustration she experienced when retiring administrators, especially those whose cooperation she needed, seemed to de-invest in their jobs prior to actually leaving. For other specialists, retirements of administrators meant potential advancement opportunity for them. "Stick around," Ben has been told. "We're changing, and you're going to be part of that."

Misperceptions about Specialist Work

Some participants related experiences of having others misunderstand the nature of their work; a few also shared the philosophy that helped them reconcile such misperceptions to themselves.

The wrong idea. As this chapter has illustrated, the work of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges is quite varied among the individuals studied, and

often across the range of duties of each individual specialist. A number of the interviewees expressed concern that other people on campus might get the wrong idea about just what their job was--and what their educational credentials were--if they based their perceptions on some of the tasks these staff were seen doing around campus. For instance, Barb commented that people from the community who saw her in the college's floral shop ringing up orders with students might think that was her main job, rather than the complicated support function she provided for her department's faculty and students. Ted, who wore many hats, so to speak, wondered if people who saw him moving around special desks for students in wheelchairs thought he was part of the facilities crew; in fact, a faculty member once asked him if he could find a left-handed desk for another student in the class.

Margaret told of being admonished by her supervisor for performing clerical tasks, and admitted that she didn't like the "subservient" role she had to play with her volunteers, ordering their coffee and typing the minutes to their meetings. Marcia knew that when she worked with students, blowing up balloons or stapling decorations onto a bulletin board, people who saw her doing so might be amazed to hear that she held a master's degree, had wide-ranging responsibilities for programming, and acted as the college's agent in establishing contracts with big name lecturers and entertainers.

Whatever it takes. These specialists might take on an "Oh, well" attitude in response to Matthew's comment that "if you do something where you get your hands dirty, you're always going to be on the bottom in education." Although they realize that such tasks might be perceived as being "beneath them," the staff in this group saw such duties as the means to a more important goal: serving their students or their departments well. Marcia likely expressed the sentiments of her fellow interviewees when she explained that her willingness to be flexible in this way related to her feelings about what being a "professional" really meant: "That's a professional attitude that you have a commitment to the job. And whatever it takes to get it done is what it takes. And to go the extra mile."

The Community College as a Desirable Work Environment

The specialists interviewed for this study generally expressed satisfaction with the community college as a desirable environment in which to work. Their comments related to this theme focused on the balance that their jobs afforded them and the satisfying challenges that were part of their jobs.

Having a life. Mark expressed to me his appreciation for the community college environment: "It gives us time to be dads. It gives us time to be moms. It gives us time to have a life outside the college." He, for example, had time to be involved in community theatre in the evenings, and Ben and Frank spoke of heavy involvement in their churches. Betty told of being able to take time off during the winter ski season, and Barb noted that some staff had more flexibility than faculty in choosing when they wanted to use vacation time. She says, "[Faculty] are tied to the academic calendar so they don't get to take vacation. I can take my vacation any time I want to, which I like. I like flexibility."

Challenging, rewarding, and forgiving. Several specialists described their work at the community college as "challenging" and "rewarding," and they expressed appreciation for the opportunities they had had to learn on the job and to try new things. Mark made the following comment about the "forgiving" community college environment:

> You know, you're not going to see us weeping over our desks over something going wrong, if we have a bad week or a bad year or something, because it's going to be OK. Secondly, the college environment is forgiving for what we do. We do make our share of mistakes. If I make a misstep, the college is going to be better able to absorb that misstep and allow me to take another chance, rather than, "Oh, we've got to get rid of the program."

Several other interviewees felt that their institutions--or at least their supervisors--welcomed innovation and encouraged them to run with their new ideas. Barb commented, "If you're good at what you're doing you're always looking for something new to challenge you and make it interesting. . . . I really kind of customized this position with the interests that I have and the skills that I have." Another staff member who described several opportunities she had had to develop new programs and initiatives was Angie, the

academic advisement coordinator. "The nice thing about here is you can take your job to the level you want to take it to," Angie told me. "My job, I've been able to do so many things."

Summary

The eighteen master's prepared professional staff who were interviewed for this study serve as specialists in five professional categories in community colleges: student affairs, campus/community relations, academic department support, instructional support, and specific student populations. Their jobs were individually quite varied and, as one interviewee put it, "never boring." When considered in the aggregate, these portraits provide a more complete picture of the work of community colleges, and who does what work.

More specifically, in this chapter I sought to relate the varied nature of staff work in community colleges both through individual portraits and an examination of commonly shared experiences, including staff's supervisory and fiscal responsibilities, their involvement in teaching and other forms of scholarship, the impact on their work of current "hot" issues in community colleges, the misperceptions created by the nature of some of the tasks they perform, and their assessment of the community college as a place to work.

Much has been learned about the nature of specialists' work in the community college in this chapter. In the following chapters, I explore how these employees view themselves as professionals, and what meaning they make of their place, their value, and their future in their institutions.

CHAPTER 5:

ON BEING SPECIALISTS

I think that there are some people that don't realize that I basically have the same credentials as they do. . . . I think that the perception is that classified staff is basically clerical jobs. I obviously don't feel that way. I don't feel what I'm doing is clerical. But I think that as a whole, now as me personally, do I think people see me as clerical? No, I think that in the three years that I've been here, it's been important for me to earn the respect of staff, administration and faculty and I think that is something that has been important to me and I feel that I have earned. But I have to keep earning that. But as a whole, do I think that the school looks upon classified staff as professionals? No, I don't. -- *Beth*

There's some kind of mentality that classified [staff] don't have professional organizations, and classified don't travel, and classified just don't do those kinds of things. --*Marcia*

I think I have a lot of freedom, in how to run the office. My supervisor doesn't really get involved in the day to day working of the office, or how we do things here. As long as they're going smoothly, I don't think she feels like she needs to get involved. I have authority here in the office. . . --*Lucy*

In this chapter, I begin to answer the second and third research questions that guided this study, namely, "How do master's prepared professional staff make sense of themselves as professionals, and how do they believe they are perceived by others (in terms of autonomy and authority) in their community college setting?" and "How do they describe and evaluate their experiences with decision making at their institutions?" While I initially believed decision making would be a central factor in the professionalism and status of this group, I found that this topic did not generate half as much interest among interviewees as those related to professionalism, status, and mobility.

The specialists included in this study considered themselves professionals. Such a statement, however, is fraught with multiple interpretations, a few nagging questions, and even a paradox or two. In this chapter, I analyze what "being a professional" meant to those I interviewed. I begin by examining interviewees' views of their own professionalism and how they believed others--especially faculty and administrators--perceived them at their institutions. I then explore the degree of autonomy and authority that the eighteen specialists felt they had on their jobs, and relate these constructs to decision making at their institutions.

The Meaning of "Professional"

The specialists in this study offered their own definitions of the term "professional," and made an important distinction between their own and others' perceptions of them as professionals. Another essential aspect of their sense of themselves as professionals was their identification with broader professional fields, as evidenced through their involvement in formal professional organizations.

Interviewees' Views on Professionalism

The specialists interviewed for this study focused on various dimensions of professionalism when they sought to define the term and explain how it related to them. Specifically, two definitions of professionalism were offered repeatedly: one stressing expertise and another emphasizing commitment.

The eighteen vignettes in Chapter Four describing the work of the specialists in this study stressed the uniqueness and specialization of their daily activities. Interviewees told me that, as experts in their specialties, they considered themselves professionals. For instance, Stacy defined "professionals" as "people who have. . . some specific training and expertise in their area," and added that supervision of other employees may or may not be a part of this role.

For Marcia, and many others, professionalism was less a matter of a marketable commodity--expertise--and more a matter of commitment to the field. A "professional attitude," she mused, meant "that whatever it takes is what's going to be needed." Margaret, the development office specialist, related a story with a similar message:

> My previous vice president used to tell me that it even showed the wrong picture if I was doing things that students—in fact, I was typing some mailing labels a few days ago, and one of the administrators came through and said, "Do you need help with something?". . . Like I shouldn't be doing that. I thought, "I've got to get these out, and my student's left for the day." In my mind, that was the only way to get them out. I mean, there wasn't anybody else that I could think of.

The Power of Others' Perceptions

While most of the specialists interviewed for this study believed they were highly educated, experienced, and expert in their areas--making them *feel like* professional people in their respective fields--most questioned whether others *viewed* them as professionals in their colleges. On several occasions, interviewees said they felt like unknown employees whose credentials were a secret of sorts, and some also made a link between their salaries and others' views of their professional standing. Despite the questions that lingered in the minds of many, a few specialists were able to identify behaviors of others which did make them feel they were viewed as professionals.

The mystery employees. One problem, cited by several interviewees, was that faculty and staff simply didn't know just what the specialists did. As Ted, a professional in disability access services, said, "I've had some [administrators] just come out and say, 'I don't know what you do.'" Mark commented in a similar vein, "They don't understand what we do here. It's mysterious; it's slightly dangerous." There was often a misperception that their jobs were largely clerical, as Lucy explained:

> I think some people still sort of have the idea that we're just sort of pushing paper here. And there is a lot of pushing paper that goes on, but. . . there's a lot you need to know behind that, so I think a lot of people still sort of see it as a clerical type of job.

Sometimes such misunderstandings were related to the past experiences of some upper-level professional staff--several of whom used to work in clerical positions at their colleges. As Ted told me, "I used to work in the testing center 13 years ago. They still think I do that." Similarly, Marcia related this scenario:

> [There are] a number of specialists. . . who have been at the college a long time, and they've grown in their role and therefore the job has been reclassified to being a specialist [after] that person has been a secretary or clerk for a number of years."

The unheralded master's. Interestingly, I spoke with many interviewees who believed that most of their administrative and faculty colleagues did not realize that they held master's degrees. This lack of knowledge, they strongly suggested, worked against their being perceived as full-fledged professionals in their institutions. Beth echoed Lucy's sense that people thought of her job as a clerical one, and added, "I think there are some people that don't realize that I basically have the same credentials as they do." Don, the campus police chief, held the same view: "There aren't a lot of people, other than the people I deal with on a frequency basis, that know I have a master's degree."

Along these same lines, Mark, the business and community development specialist, explained why he added the initials "MBA" after his name in all of his professional correspondence:

> Having an MBA at a college does give you a couple of points. . . . You may get that couple extra seconds with somebody, because it's "[name], MBA." You'll see, it's one of the first things I put on my cards, and when I send generated e-mail, my signature has it. I would never use it anywhere else, but in college communication, everything else, those initials are gold.

While some colleges made attempts to let employees and students know about the credentials of new staff by mentioning them in employee newsletter write-ups about new staff, and by listing staff educational credentials in the back of the college's catalog, many interviewees wondered if their faculty and administrative colleagues really noticed such information. Stacy, the writing center professional, illustrated this point as well as anyone I interviewed, when she told of having her educational preparation level recognized only at

certain times. "When someone really needs something to be done," she remarked, "then all of a sudden we're good enough." Speaking about her involvement in the holistic grading of students' writing samples to determine class placement, Stacy said:

> None of the faculty are around between semesters, so they had to find someone who had a master's degree who could step in and do such a thing when the faculty members aren't here, so that's why then I ended up getting put through the training.

Stacy added another example of this phenomenon:

> [When] it's convenient for them they remember that I have a master's degree. . . [then they do]. This semester they were short on part time instructors because I think there's 67 sections of English ___ and you need a master's degree to teach at that level. Many of the full time English faculty don't like teaching Freshman Comp. That's not the most fun class to teach for them. They were desperate and it happened to be that the people who were in charge of scheduling the part timers are a couple of the English faculty who I do have the best relationship with. . . . So they were calling me up. . . . But again it was an example of when it's needed, then they remember that I have the degree.

Monetary affirmation. Although not normally thought of as a defining characteristic of professionalism, salary and benefits conveyed a powerful message to staff about whether they were viewed as professionals in their colleges. When asked if professional staff like himself were seen as professionals at his college, Frank's immediate response was, "Well, they just gave them a raise." He then explained how strong staff turnout at a recent board meeting helped convince the board that the salary contract package for staff should in many ways mimic that established for faculty. Although most interviewees indicated awareness of the disparity between faculty and professional staff salary ranges and benefits, some still saw their situation as a good deal, termed by Mark "the golden handcuffs." Barb clarified, however, that satisfaction with one's pay was not the same as satisfaction with equity issues:

> I don't have any complaints about pay, but I'm single, I don't have children, so I have more than enough to live on. As far as benefits, I have no problem with my benefits or the way things are structured, and I also believe that this was told to me when I took the job, if I didn't like it, I didn't have to take the job. The only problem I have is with the disparity between the faculty and staff in benefits, not pay, because they are totally different things. I don't see why there should be a difference in the benefit

> aspect. Why should they be getting a different retirement package than we get? Not dollars-wise, but percentages or whatever, it should just be the same.

Another message that money conveyed about one's status as a professional, according to interviewees, was acknowledgement for work done that was above and beyond the parameters of one's original job description. Beth related a frustrating incident:

> The administration's starting bid for a salary increase was 1% and I personally feel that is a slap in the face. Especially considering that my boss, the vice president who oversees this office, that summer we were without a director. A lot was left with me and the full time advisor because our counselor does not work during the summer. We were left to run this place. And we had just come out of that summer, and yet they are looking at me as giving me and [name] and everyone else a 1% salary increase? I didn't get extra money and I was doing director, administrative duties and so was he. But I didn't get any extra money and then to get slapped with a 1% salary increase? That's an insult.

Additionally, Beth believed her college's administration conveyed disregard for professional staff when they changed, without notice, the pay period for staff from every two weeks to twice a month. Asserting that some classified staff live "from paycheck to paycheck," Beth fumed when she thought about the memo that was issued to staff after the decision to change the system had been made. The memo started with, "As you already know. . . " They didn't know.

Feeling like professionals: positive perceptions. Although several of the specialists I interviewed doubted whether others in their colleges viewed them as professionals, some felt otherwise. When I asked these specialists how others' behavior contributed to this perception, they touched upon three themes: authority, respect, and autonomy.

While the first behavior ties into the issue of professional authority and will be treated later in this chapter, it deserves brief mention here: the act of being asked for one's opinions on matters related to one's area of expertise. For example, Emma mentioned having her opinions sought out by others as an indication that they saw her as a professional; Don also acknowledged that employees of the college sought his advice on matters related to the law. Similarly, numerous participants described experiences of being

asked to serve on committees or task forces because they had specialized knowledge relevant to the assignment.

Another behavioral indicator was somewhat more subtle and qualitative in nature. Some participants asserted that the way others on campus did--or did not--talk to them said something about how they were perceived as professionals. Jeannette articulated this view as follows:

> I think being asked to be on some of these committees, and maybe even the fact that the president. . . we're talking now, and people have told me that I seem professional to them. It's just the way they really talk to you here, like a lot of the higher administration, maybe because it's a small school, they will talk to you fairly often in a candid way, just about anything, whereas other larger places, you may not ever have any conversations with any of the higher ups. You just don't see them that much. Here, they'll actually sit down and talk to you about subjects.

Many of the specialists I interviewed also said that the amount of autonomy they enjoyed in their work sent a strong message about how others--especially administrators--viewed them as professionals. As Roy, who coordinated his college's programs and services for special populations, told me:

> As necessary, the deans [will] involve me, in the planning of the grants, the writing of them. I'm invited to attend the meetings. I'm given a fair amount of--actually, quite a bit of--responsibility, and. . . I find that I have a lot of independence; you know, they don't check up on me. They know that I'll try to do my best to get things done, and I usually do that, so. . . all of those things, I feel, are very important in that.

All in all, while they saw themselves as professionals in their fields, most of the specialists I interviewed for this study had doubts about whether others at their colleges viewed them the same way. They felt that few people knew what they did or what their credentials were, and that pay inequities with other groups on campus carried strong messages about whether they were considered professionals.

Identifying with One's Professional Field

Despite others' perceptions, most of the interviewees saw themselves as professionals in their respective areas, and did feel connected to their broader professional fields. One major way they maintained this connection was through involvement in

professional organizations. This involvement occasionally had a downside, however, when it prompted specialists to confront the realization that their professional status off-campus was quite different from their status at their own institutions.

Professional organizations. Each participant in this study not only had a field with which he or she identified as his or her profession, but each identified at least one professional organization of which he or she was a member.[5] Several of the organizations mentioned were national groups, such as Willis's National Equipment Managers' Association, Stacy's National Writing Center Association, or Ted's Association for Higher Education and Disability. Membership in national organizations and attendance at conferences were seen as ways that the specialists could stay current in their fields and network with others doing similar work.

Several participants were active in state and local professional organizations. They appreciated the opportunities for networking and resource sharing that were afforded by their involvement. Don gave an example of the benefits he derived from attending meetings of his professional association:

> It's the Illinois Campus Law Enforcement Administrators. ICLEA. . . . We have a monthly meeting at various college locations throughout the state, and each college gets a chance to host a meeting, and at that meeting, we discuss new legislation that would affect colleges, and problems in certain areas. . . . We have community colleges, and we represent all the universities too. . . . Usually, what will happen is, if somebody's got a problem, this problem is brought out and maybe somebody's got a solution to it and we talk about what current problems are going on. As a matter of fact, in the [newsletter] that I just got recently, preliminary discussions have taken place with the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police to hold joint training sessions for our members and the chiefs of police, so that's something that we're talking about.

Interviewees had interesting things to say about how they felt when they attended meetings of their professional associations. Many felt like Marcia, who remarked, "I think when we're together as a group, we see a real common thread among ourselves." Since many of these specialists were alone in doing what they did in their colleges, most said that

they relished these opportunities to connect with fellow colleagues. Such interactions also afforded them, for better or worse, opportunities to learn that different colleges did things differently.

Status dissonance. While professional organization involvement afforded members a chance to be with their professional peers, work on joint projects, and learn how other institutions do things, several interviewees found the disparity between their status in these outside groups and their status on campus somewhat disconcerting. For example, Mark, the business and economic development professional who worked at a college where all employees were either faculty, administrators, or generic classified staff, said that he had found that people at other colleges who had similar job duties were usually administrators. As he put it, "Externally, I'm treated in every other area as an administrator, as an executive." The problem for Mark occurred when he moved between the two environments, as witnessed by the following interchange:

> [Mark]: The perception of the community—when I step off the college, the actual physical college lot here, and I go out into the community, I am no longer a "classified" person. I am considered the equal of any economic development director, any chamber president.
>
> [KGH]: And yet the perception on campus—
>
> [Mark]: The guy who cuts the grass.

Other participants, such as Stacy and Ted, said that through their involvement in professional organizations, they had also learned that their professional equivalent at another college was considered an administrator, a revelation that didn't sit well with them. Stacy remarked that she often met people at conferences who did what she did, but "they were a director or instead of what my position is, they were maybe the equivalent to my boss instead." Ted admitted how this realization diminished his sense of himself as a professional:

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[5] A comprehensive listing of the professional organizations mentioned by study participants is provided in Appendix D.

> I feel like I'm not a professional when I'm in these meetings, because they are higher level positions than mine, even though we do the same thing, so that's just on my mind. . . . Well, there's a disabled student services consortium. . . . They're all usually administrator [or] faculty level, and I'm a specialist. Even though we all do the same thing. . . . And then, I asked them all for their job descriptions, and I presented it to personnel. I said, "Look!" And [personnel] said, "You're right."

Mark, Stacy, and Ted's comments related not only to the peer affiliation that professional organizations offered them, but also to the status they perceived themselves as having on their campuses. The issue of status will be treated in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Whether or not the participants in this study were termed "specialists" at their own institutions, the term proved to be a fitting one for them. Interviewees were highly specialized staff employees who possessed a level of expertise and a commitment to their work that led them to describe themselves as professionals. Although they were not always convinced that others on campus perceived them as such, they chose instead to focus on excellence in their work. Their sense of professionalism was further rounded out by their involvement in professional organizations. As competent professionals, they also exercised autonomy and authority in their work, aspects of specialist work to which I now turn.

Autonomy and Authority

The community college specialists included in this study made it clear that the autonomy they had in their work had an important connection to others' perceptions of them as competent professionals in their fields. They had a great deal to say on the subject of autonomy. They also discussed the important link between their level of autonomy and the professional authority they experienced as specialists. As many emphasized, being considered an authority had its ups and downs, and interviewees shared both successful and thwarted experiences with having their authority recognized and valued at their institutions.

Autonomy: Degrees of Freedom on the Job

Almost every professional staff member studied had a considerable amount of autonomy in his/her work; many listed autonomy as one of the factors which made their jobs very satisfying. In fact, Ben, one of the student activities professionals interviewed, said that it was a condition of his accepting the job in the first place. "I think there's a lot of autonomy," he remarked. "I told [name] when I took this job, 'I need this. If you tell me here today that that's not going to happen, I'll not accept the job.' And I wouldn't have." The themes related to autonomy that emerged in my conversations with the specialists included freedom in scheduling, administrators' trust in them to do their work, the way that autonomy brought out employee resourcefulness, the experiences of a few who felt they lacked autonomy, and the connection they perceived between autonomy and authority.

Scheduling. Ben was also one of the individuals whose type of work necessitated some flexibility in work hours, which his supervisor was happy to give him. As an example, he offered, "I'm going to the [professional sports] game tomorrow. I'm leaving at 4:00. That's fine. She knows that I worked 14 hours last Monday." Emma noted, "I have free rein on my time," while Frank commented:

> I can set my own hours, though I'm supposed to put in 40 hours a week; I do, and usually more than that. . . . But, you know, for instance, yesterday I had a meeting at a church. . . and that went from 9:00 until noon, so I just called in and said, "I'll be in at noon," and I'll make up the hours someplace else.

Another specialist described his varied work hours:

> I'm supposed to start at 8:00 and be finished at 4:00. Well, that doesn't work for this job. My hours are very, very flexible. Sometimes I'll start at 1:00 and go until 8:00. Sometimes I'll come in here for one hour and leave. . . . In the summer, I'll come here and park my car—starting with the basketball season, I'll probably be here 7 days a week, 14 hours a day. To make up for that, during the summer, I come here, park my car, and a board member or somebody will pick me up and we'll go golfing. (laughter) Now, on the golf course, don't think I'm not working. I'll go up to, somehow get to know the person there. . . and say, "Hey, I'm from the [college organization], blah blah blah," and I get donations during a golf tournament.

Getting the job done. While autonomy in scheduling was important to several specialists, what meant even more to them was being trusted as specialists in their respective professions to do their jobs appropriately with minimal supervision. Most of the participants stated that they were allowed to plan and carry out programs, projects, and daily tasks without asking for permission on every decision. For Beth--and for the majority of specialists with whom I spoke--it all came down to trust:

> The way I perceive myself and how I feel I work the best is when I do have some freedom. I like to work independently; I've never been in a position where I had to show my boss every little thing or they were asking me to show them. I guess it's "Trust me until you have reason not to trust me." I mean I certainly need direction but give me the freedom and give me the space to develop. Train me and let me at it.

Stacy described the trusting relationship she had with someone who oversaw part of her work:

> I don't really feel like I have someone looking over me. While the faculty coordinator isn't around as much as he should be, he at least--he trusts me a lot. A lot of times even if I do ask him for his input, he'll throw it back to me anyway. " Well what do you think should be done?" He and I are pretty much on the same wavelength when it comes to even who a good tutor would be. For example, sometimes, because he's not the most punctual person in the world, he won't make it to some of the interviews and I'll be the only person who interviewed the person and he pretty much trusts my judgment, because I think we pretty much have the same kind of taste and know who would be good here. My supervisor is pretty much hands off.

Bringing out the best. A few respondents also commented that having latitude on the job was the best way to bring out creativity and resourcefulness in people. Angie, who worked in academic advisement, had been able to develop innovative advisement and orientation programs that served as models for other community colleges. In part, she attributed this to the autonomy she had. She said:

> It's a wonderful opportunity and the nice thing about here is you can take your job to the level you want to take it. My job, I've been able to do so many things. . . . We develop things as we see that we need them. We're supported well to do that, and in that sense, it's great. It's just wonderful. There are a lot of classified people here that have really developed their jobs into dynamite jobs. I think mine is a dynamite job. I love it. I love being able to do what I do and to work with all the constituencies I work with.

In Ben's estimation, autonomy was connected to empowerment. He advised, "Don't tell people how to do things, show them how to do it, and then let them do it. Don't hang over them. People's creativity comes out really big when they're empowered."

The outliers. There were only a few discrepant cases in the data related to autonomy. One such specialist was Beth, whose new supervisor provided her with less autonomy and more oversight than the supervisor she had had in the past. She explained:

> I think she has a little different style of wanting more control. The reins are a little tighter. . . . I understand everyone has different ways of doing things but for me personally it's not quite as conducive as what I had with [name]. . . . She kind of puts her foot in as far as trying to get more of where she is the boss. For example, I've always done the evaluations. Now it's going to be her and I doing the evaluations. I just kind of feel like I'm being stepped on here. And I certainly see her point, but it just can be a little [like,] "Did I do something wrong here?"

Another outlier, Jeannette, was unique in that while she did have considerable autonomy in her work, she longed for some colleagues with whom to collaborate. She explained, "I would like to have a little more teamwork, though, slightly more. It's hard to be thinking up everything all by yourself." To address this need, Jeannette found herself developing her own "team," which included a part-time assistant and some employees in other areas of the college:

> I have had some other people that work here, good friends now, that—I get some ideas from them. We share our ideas about the program. And just some of the people that teach the people, just had to make my own—but it would be nice to have somebody else who was kind of doing what I do.

The authority link. For many of the specialists studied, their level of autonomy was closely coupled with the amount of professional authority they were perceived to have in their respective fields--their specialization. For some, their supervisors gave them free rein, as long as it meant they take care of their professional areas. Of the person who was recently made his supervisor, Ted remarked, "She really doesn't have a background in disabilities or anything, so I basically continue to do my thing." Lucy likewise said administrators at her college vested much authority in her:

> I think part of it is just because nobody else here at the school, including my boss, wants to understand financial aid. (laughs) I can understand why. So they're happy to leave it to somebody else, as long as things are going OK, and they're not getting a letter from the department of education saying we've done something horribly wrong. I think that's sort of the attitude that certainly my boss—and not in a bad way, but. . . I have a feeling that she probably gets more involved and makes more suggestions in [other] departments than she does here. She'll ask me questions about things, and I mean, she really doesn't know much about financial aid at all. Nobody else at the school does, because nobody really wants to. I think it's perceived as not a fun place to work.

Indeed, not only were many of the specialists interviewed for this study trusted to carry out their jobs independently because they were viewed as experts, but some exercised so much independent judgment in their work that having a "boss" who was an administrator seemed like merely a formality to them. One student affairs professional told me:

> I do the booking without consulting him generally. . . . Technically I don't have the authority to sign the contracts but I do make all the arrangements and sign his name occasionally. . . . I can make commitments for the college. You know, verbal commitments, and his name will be on the contract, although I do anything short of an actual contract in terms of expenditures of funds. I can write up whatever letters need to be done and sign off on whatever forms.

Another specialist, who worked with a specific student population, said:

> I probably have too much [autonomy], and it may indicate, between you and me, that there's really not a need for a dean to be too hands-on with this program, because it would run without one. The only reason that the dean is essential is that she can represent the program when there's competitive needs in the college--say. . . they were fighting over rooms--well, that's the level at which those battles are won and lost. . . at the dean level. So somebody to make sure, you know, we have our rights enforced.

Aspects of Authority

Discussions of autonomy gave way to a consideration of the authority specialists believed they had in their institutions. Interviewees raised three key themes, beginning with their acknowledgement that there were different kinds of "authority." They also spoke of the committee work they performed as authorities in their areas of specialization, and how they represented their broad professional staff group in other decision-making bodies.

Professional vs. administrative authority. Parsons (1971), Blau (1973), and others have written on the difference between professional authority, which is based on expertise or knowledge in a given area, and administrative or bureaucratic authority, which is based on one's rank or position in a hierarchy. As indicated earlier, most of the specialists interviewed for this study saw themselves as being professional authorities, often linking their expertise to their autonomy on the job and the latitude most of them exercised in making their own decisions about how to do their work. Only a few, however--including Mark, Frank, Stacy, and Lucy, who had supervisory responsibilities over others--could be considered as having some degree of administrative authority within their departments.

Specialists appeared to understand these distinct types of authority in practice, even if they were largely unfamiliar with their scholarly roots. In my interview with Matthew, for instance, he summed up well the presumed rationality that often came with administrative authority, and the way that he felt professional authority was sometimes ignored at his institution:

> Is it "titular"?-- authority because of the title? My impression has always been—here's another observation on administrators—"Well, I'm the administrator and you're not, so you can't possibly know any more than I do, because if you know more than I do, then you should be in charge." . . . I've always thought that a college would be a great place, you could go and talk to this person and get their opinion, because you have all these specialists. [Administrators] don't, or it doesn't seem like it.

Similarly, Don, the campus police chief, related his frustration with a former supervisor who had administrative authority, but who certainly did not have professional authority in the area of law enforcement:

> I spoke to this gentleman on numerous occasions, and it was always--it had to be his way. We were always at odds with each other, and it got to the point where one day, I looked in the catalog, and everybody in the administration had, behind their names, either Ph.D., M.S., something like that, and he had C.M.P. It said "University of ___." It got to the point where I said, "I'm going to find out what the heck this is." I called University of ___, and I asked them, what does that designation stand for, and they told me, "We have no idea. We don't have anything like that." I asked him one day, "What does this mean? You've got this in back of your name. How did you get that, and what did you do for it?" And he says, "Well, that stands for 'certified maintenance professional.' I attended a

> three-day seminar in asbestos abatement." I said, "That's the extent of your education?" He says, "Yes." (chuckles). . . . I mean, here I've got a master's degree and this guy doesn't even have a bachelor's degree. He's a certified maintenance professional. It took him three days to get it.

With all the expertise Stacy had in her professional field and the administrative authority she exercised each day as she oversaw the work of her tutors, handled problems, and signed off on grade reports, the real administrative authority (by title) for her area lay in the hands of her supervisor and a faculty liaison who did not work in the center on a daily basis. In her case, the discrepancy was not quite as irksome as it was for Don, because at least she was allowed to make her own decisions related to her area of expertise.

The community college staff I interviewed were indeed specialists, or professional authorities; the work they performed every day, the expertise they had accumulated, and their connections to their broader fields reflected this. The distinction between *being* a professional authority and *having* administrative authority, however, was an important one to make, for it was sometimes in this distinction that each specialist's ambiguous position in his or her institution became apparent, and frustration occurred.

Authority on committees. If, indeed, the specialists interviewed for this study experienced some degree of professional authority in their departments, how did this authority carry over into their institutions, particularly in their work on various campus committees? Was their expertise as specialists acknowledged at their colleges, and were they provided with opportunities to make decisions about matters related to their specialty?

Many interviewees noted that they were asked to participate in various committees because of their area of professional expertise. They cited numerous examples, including Lucy's only committee, the scholarship committee, which she served on because of her financial aid expertise; Stacy's aforementioned involvement on test development and portfolio assessment committees, in which she used her English expertise; and Barb's stint on the grounds committee, drawing on her experience in horticulture. In addition, as someone who specialized in her college's welfare-to-work population, Jeannette was

explicitly told by her dean that she was considered the "contact person" on matters related to this group, not only on the campus, but in the local community as well. This expertise played into her being selected to serve on the college committee that planned its annual job fair, and another committee that worked to incorporate the workplace competencies and foundation skills identified by the federal initiatives SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) and the Workforce Investment Act into the college's curriculum.

Roy, who coordinated services for several "special populations" at his college and who knew the local community very well, was called upon to represent students served by his department on a college-wide committee that revamped the college's assessment testing and class placement policies. He was somewhat modest about the expertise he brought to this and other committee work on campus:

> I have, I think, some knowledge and awareness of what's going on in the community that helps. . . . As far as the characteristics of, especially, [names local cities], some of the demographic information that I've just worked with over the years, I think, people ask me for specific pieces of information about that, and. . . I can usually find that out. So in a way, I wouldn't say necessarily I'm a nationally known authority, but locally, you know, in a sense. . . [I am].

While almost every specialist with whom I spoke believed that his or her professional authority was acknowledged and valued by fellow committee members, a few related accounts of unequal treatment that, although singular in nature, were still powerful. Betty, the nursing lab specialist with over 30 years of experience in her field, could give input in department meetings but she was not permitted to vote, because she was staff and not faculty. Stacy, who worked in the writing center, shared the following place-situating story:

> I was asked to attend one meeting with some faculty and there were just a couple staff members and the rest of them were faculty. And we got there and one faculty member was there and she was like, "Why are <u>they</u> here?" So you do feel kind of that--like you're on the outside, with some of them but not all of them. . . . I think it was probably the dean of the area who said why we were there.

While rare instances like those cited by Betty and Stacy indicated that the specialists were not viewed by others as equal colleagues in their institutions, by and large the specialists I spoke with indicated that, when they were assigned to committees because of their expertise, they were viewed and acknowledged as authorities in their respective professional areas.

Representing professional staff. Many of the specialists interviewed also served on other committees of a college-wide nature as representatives of their broader "staff" category and not so much as experts in their fields. At all three colleges, specialists told me that institutional committees usually included a cross-section of employee groups, with the goal of providing not only representation, but opportunities to serve the greater institutional good. "I think there's fairly equal representation on those committees of classified, administrators, and faculty," Frank explained, ". . . so that's healthy." Several interviewees had served on search committees for administrative or staff positions; other committees included (but were not limited to) affirmative action, communications, grounds, service learning, environmental issues, staff development, hospitality, graphics and interior design, classification system review, strategic planning, and health insurance. Such a listing reflects the involvement that these specialists had to serving their institutions; indeed, it bears a different sort of witness to Rifkin's (1998) professional dimension of the "service ethic." The specialists I spoke with who were active on college committees sometimes expressed motives of eagerness to serve their institutions, like Barb, who commented, "If anybody asks me to do something, sure, I'll do it."

Some of the interviewees also emphasized the importance of being involved in committees, either of a field-related or broader institutional nature, as a way of meeting the individual goal of becoming known around their colleges and establishing their credibility. As Angie told me:

> I think you're viewed on how you do your job and if you act timid around some of the people who supposedly have a whole lot more authority, then they won't take you seriously. . . . But if you just approach them in a

> different way, then you'll be taken seriously. . . . When you're in a meeting with all constituencies all the time and just voice a clear, well thought-out opinion, I feel that I can call any administrator and chat with them about almost anything. We've served on committees together. You have to get out there and you have to be on the committees or they are never going to listen to you, and so I've been on committees with a lot of people, so I think that helped.

The idea of proving oneself was also something Ben had considered. He, like Angie and other interviewees, had been involved in numerous committees on campus, and felt he was seen as a partner in decision making. For him, it was part of his plan for upward mobility at his college. Ben saw his current position as a "stepping stone" for his administrative ambitions. As he told me: "I have ambitions beyond student activities. I want to be in administration. . . . I made that very clear when I took this job."

From Committees to Administration: A Faulty Pipeline

Thus far, my discussion of the perceived authority and decision making involvement of specialist staff members has been fairly positive. Most felt that they were respected, equal members on college committees who had a say in the decision making process. Especially within committees and other groups, most reported being listened to and thought of as authorities on their areas. Unfortunately, the decisions of and input from the committees of which these specialists were a part were sometimes ignored by administration, leading interviewees (and also others, to be sure) to conclude that they had wasted their time and that they didn't have a voice. As one interviewee put it: "I personally feel that the committees are a waste of time, because the committee goes there and the administration makes up their mind anyway." One institution in particular seemed to have a run on top-down decision making that ignored stakeholder perspectives, but at all three schools, there were stories to be told. The interviewees cited several instances in which the decisions and input of search committees and other college committees were ignored by administration; for some, this led to a lack of interest in future committee participation.

Search committees, in particular, seemed to suffer from the "faulty pipeline" malady. Interviewees at all three colleges viewed their service on search committees for

administrative or staff positions as a waste of time, in no small measure because most felt committee recommendations were often ignored by administrators who made the final hiring decisions. One specialist stated:

> I've been on a couple of committees, but the committees that I came in on were committees formed to evaluate the credentials of prospective employees. . . . For vice presidents, but as it came down to it, the person that the president wanted got the job. I found some people that I thought, "Boy this guy sounds pretty good. His credentials are there.". . .We [on the committee] thought along the same lines, but [administration said], "No, we don't want that."

Another staff member told of a similar experience:

> I was just on a search committee, and it's a joke. It's like, depending on what area, who's who and that, if you're on a search committee--it came down to three people. . . Anyway, first and third choices were female. OK, so then after we've spent all this time, we'll take this and give this to the vice president. They hired the third person, the third choice female. Why would they do that? They're looking for somebody, they say, "This is what we're looking for," but then they hire this person. The only reason I can think of is that she's working on her doctorate, she's going to be a college administrator. So it's like, I don't know if it's because they think, "Oh, faculty will relate to her because she's going to have a doctorate." No. To anybody that's been any kind of faculty, that doesn't mean anything. . . . What happens is, one of my colleagues says, "You know, I was on a search committee, and they pulled that same crap, so the next time they ask me, I'm going to tell them I'm not doing it." I think that's really what happens. People get screwed. They're not treated fairly. In a way, it's almost like they're used, it seems.

The sense of futility accompanying committee work was not a phenomenon restricted to search committees. As another interviewee told me:

> I was on, when they celebrated their __ anniversary, they had this big deal. I don't know why, but I was on the committee. So they said, "We want ideas," so you come up with all these ideas, and it sort of just came down to what the president wanted.

Still another specialist described the irony--and futility--of the work his staff governance committee had done to present a compensation package proposal to the board. He remarked, "I think the decision about the percentage we get each year is probably decided before we present. . . . The day we presented, it was in one of the local papers what we were getting." The "faulty pipeline" concerns expressed by several specialists affected their views of themselves as partners in institutional decision making; such concerns also

made specialists question the audibility of their voice in matters of governance, which I will address in Chapter Six.

When asked what hypothetical "advice" they would give to administrators in order to enhance the morale or job satisfaction of professional staff at their colleges, several interviewees emphasized the importance of listening to people, and then proceeded to recount anecdotes like those above. Generally, while the specialists interviewed for this study felt that, because of their professional authority, they had opportunities to make decisions about their own work and to be heard in committees, many felt that the collective work of institutional committees was all for naught, since final decisions were actually made elsewhere. One participant offered a fitting, final comment on staff--and others'--involvement in decision making in his community college:

> You go to the meetings, you invest a year of your time in this stuff, and when it's all over, either number one, nothing's happened and the committees just go away, which happened with the direction of the college. . . . They kind of fizzle out. . . . They came up with the beautiful seven tenets—the seven tenets of shared governance at [this college]. And I don't know what the hell ever happened to them. In my opinion, I saw what happened to them, they went up, and they do, by proportion, we have very few administrators, but that shows where the power of the college lies. They took the things they wanted, discarded what they didn't want, and there they are—the seven tenets. And after that, there was no follow-through to ensure that things happened. I became very disenchanted with working on college committees, and to this day, right now, I don't sit on any.

The specialists in this study viewed themselves as professionals in their respective fields, and generally felt that their professional authority was respected in their institutions. They were given a considerable amount of autonomy in their daily work, which also implied that they had the trust of the administration and some level of respect as professionals. By and large, in their participation on committees and other decision making bodies in their institutions, they felt that they were treated as equal members. The problem, however, was that they often felt that committee recommendations went unheeded by administrators, making them feel that their time participating had not been well spent. How well was the voice of specialists actually being heard? What might this indicate about their

relative importance in their institutions? How did they perceive their status in their institutions, and what opportunities did they have to change that status? It is to these and other questions that I now turn.

CHAPTER 6:

A SENSE OF "PLACE"

We may talk to administrators, but they don't listen. --Betty

I think there are some people in the college who see this [department] as a really important structure, but if it went away, the college would still go on. . . . However, I think the importance is to the students themselves and the program. This is a vitally important program--I'd give it a 10--to the students who are attending here, and I think that's the only reason why we're here; it's not so much that it does the college any good, it's because of the students around here. --Frank

I always think of [this college] being kind of like the olden days when we really had a very class-conscious kind of community, where you have the upper class here who can't talk to the lower class people. Because it is very much like that. . . a caste system. People are too aware of their social status at all times. --Stacy

What does happen to us? I mean, where is the graveyard for the classified [staff]? Where do they end up? Do they go back out into business, or do we—and this is my fear—I think we just rot here. --Mark

We staff would go out and improve ourselves--and this is the basis of working for an educational institution, lifelong learning--and we're not getting any reward. So [administration] put into effect a "professional development plan." --Margaret

In this chapter, I examine five critical issues related to the "sense of place" that the eighteen specialists interviewed for this study experienced. I begin by exploring

interviewees' perceptions of their "voice" in their institutions--including whether they felt they had one and how audible that voice was to others. From here, I discuss specialists' assessments of the importance of their work to their community colleges, and the role institutional mission played in forming these assessments. I then examine interviewee perspectives on the employee hierarchy they sensed at their colleges, and their position in it. Mobility within this hierarchy is then considered, by reflecting upon specialists' opportunities for advancement in their institutions. Finally, I analyze participants' views on professional development opportunities in their colleges, and the strong message that support--or lack of support--for such activities conveyed to them as professional staff.

Voice

In the preceding chapter, the specialists interviewed for this study articulated an interesting twist on the idea of "having a voice" in decision making at their institutions. On the one hand, they felt that their professional authority was generally respected, and that they were allowed membership--and input--in groups and committees, especially those somehow related to their area of expertise. On the other hand, many said that their "voice" was seldom heard by institutional administrators--a problem, they conceded, that they shared with fellow committee members (whether faculty or staff). In this section, I first consider interviewee perspectives on the idea of voice in their institutions. I then examine governance issues that relate to voice and audibility in the three community colleges in this study.

Having a Say

When asked if they thought master's prepared professional staff had a voice in their institutions, the eighteen specialists I interviewed were split on the issue. Some felt they had a voice in the life of the college, while others shared stories of being rendered voiceless.

Several individuals responded positively when asked if they felt they (or specialists as a whole) had a voice in broader decisions affecting the college. Three themes emerged in the comments from this group: access to upper-level administrators, the relationship between involvement level and voice, and the message of cross-categorical committee rosters.

For some specialists, having a voice in their institutions mean having access to upper-level administrators (and, in one case, board members) who sought out their input and listened to their perspectives. For instance, Willis provided the following account of the access he had to his college's president:

> I've got an open door policy with him. . . . In fact, I call him on his voice machine, because sometimes it's hard to get through to the president, because the secretaries are unique—they're there to protect him. . . . I'll wait and I'll call him at night, when they're not here, and I'll get his voice mail, and I'll say, "Hey, Doc, there's a minor thing that happened. I'd like to clue you in on it. To me, it's no big deal, but to them it is. If you want to, give me a call." And he'll call me.

It wasn't only access to the president that made Willis feel he had a voice at his school. The same "open door policy" extended to others as well:

> I'm able to get to the administration much easier. . . [and] the board people? We've got three of those people in our [athletic association] group, officers. So to me, I call them on a first name basis.

Beth also reported having access to her president, relating the following:

> Around Easter time he called me into his office to talk about the core values but I spent two hours there because he asked me my feelings on what happened with the union and exactly that question, why is morale so low around here. I gave him an earful. He asked me, so I dove right in. I took advantage of it. I was level headed. I did not get emotional, but we had a very nice conversation and I think I was heard. And so that was nice. But I think he does a really nice job of getting out and talking to people.

Likewise, when asked if she had a voice in the life of her college, Emma told me, "It's OK, because the Vice President for Student Development is accessible to me, so if I want to talk to her, I talk to her."

For a small number of specialists, positive feelings about their voice were linked to a high level of involvement in committees and task forces at their college. Ben, for one, described his involvement in the life of his college:

> I serve on some college-wide committees. I'm on the service learning committee. I'm on new student orientation and other things as they come up. I just finished with the all-staff workshop committee, which we just did at the beginning of the year.

By getting out and working with others on campus on mutual goals, Ben felt that he had "an equal voice." He was also confident that his involvement was a win-win proposition: "I feel I can provide some leadership there as well. And that is celebrated and commended and all of that."

Beth made a connection between committee work, voice, and earning the respect of colleagues on campus. As she told me:

> I do think that I have the respect of administration. About 2 years ago, the president asked me to represent classified staff as part of a core values and leadership committee. . . I went to a couple conferences with him, one several-day conference down in [city]. This was an initiative that was from the Illinois Community College Board to start instilling some core values

> into our college and into our mission and into the day to day operations of the college and into the curriculum. So I was honored that he asked me to represent classified staff and pulled me out of here for a couple days to go down to (city) with him as well as a faculty member and the vice president of academic affairs. So I have been serving on this committee and last week the faculty member and I presented, for me it was probably about the 5th or 6th time I've presented a new core value to the administrators. . . . That's probably the committee that I enjoy the most. And I feel like he wouldn't have given that to me if he didn't have some sort of respect or value of my work. Considering that I had only been here a short time. . . . I'm also involved with what we call the developmental transitions committee. This committee is made up of administration, faculty and staff. The purpose of this committee was for us to help come up with methods or solutions or develop ways to help students transition from developmental or skill building courses to the college level courses. . . . It's basically English and math faculty. Vice president of student affairs, the dean of continuing ed, and the director, my boss, of counseling and testing. And then faculty, and a couple, another staff member and myself. . . . The chair of the committee is the VP of student affairs and she has asked me to present a couple times. . . . I feel like I've gotten her respect. I also set up a couple meetings where we went out to a couple different schools and I had to contact the school and basically organize all of that for the 2 meetings. So I guess looking at it from that standpoint, I have been one of the more active people as far as doing the presentations and things like that. I think I have an equal voice.

Lucy, who was fairly new on the job, looked forward to getting more involved. She stated, "A lot of the things going on in the community and the college interest me. To be able to have a voice in the direction the college is heading, I think that would definitely be something I'm interested in."

As Ben and Beth suggest, however, part of the key to getting specialists involved in committee activity that gives them a sense of voice lies in the design of institutional committees; when composition of committees is required to include employees from various categories, this carries a strong message to staff about the value of their voice. For example, at Angie's community college, new policies had been established which

required inclusion of various employee groups (and students) on most college committees. She remarked, "The chain of decision making. . . I think that it's trying to be more inclusive of everyone, and I think that inwards right now, that is what's happening. I think it's happening more and more, and I think that's good." She went on to explain how the college's president had established several "teams" to take a look at various aspects of the college's future, and how an effort had been made to include "all constituencies, as far as input." In her case, she felt like the administration was trying to listen to all voices.

At the same time (and sometimes in the same institutions) that some specialists made positive or hopeful remarks about having a voice and feeling heard, there were other specialists who felt that they had been rendered voiceless at their community colleges. For the interviewees who felt this way, voicelessness was usually linked to a sense that administrators did not necessarily want to hear what they had to say.

Stacy expressed this view as follows: "I don't think anyone listens to the specialists, really. You have to win over an administrator to talk to you. Specialists on their own or even as a group of specialists, I don't think they are heard at all." A more pessimistic view was offered by a student affairs professional at the same college, who said, "There's kind of an ongoing effort to diminish anyone's involvement in [governance]. . . . From the president on down, I think that there is a desire that any of the employment groups not be involved any more than necessary."

Lucy likewise felt her voice--and that of fellow staff--was seldom sought or heard by administrators on her campus:

> For most staff members, I don't think there's a lot of opportunity to get involved in any kind of major decision making or anything, or to have much of a voice in things that are decided. That's mostly because the committees are made up of higher level people. . . . I have heard people express interest to get involved, and they feel like they are left out when decisions are made without anybody asking them what their opinion is. I think there maybe should be more representation, not just horizontally, but vertically too, from staff. That would probably be good.

Another specialist, who was obviously disaffected with his institution, underscored how administrators at his community college "shut down" dialogue between specialists and themselves:

> This is my theory. Put this into your paper so it will go into posterity. In education, if you've got a problem and you go to an administrator, there's three levels. The first level is you tell someone, "I've got this problem." They say, "You've got problems? Look at my problems!" Then you come back and you say, "I've still got this problem." They say, "Sorry, but there's nothing I can do. I'd like to help you, but my hands are tied." Then you come back the third time, and they go, "If you don't like it, leave." . . . There's nothing you can do. Not all the time, but—maybe you can get an answer. But it just seems to be that way.

This individual felt that, in order for specialists at his college to be heard and to avoid encountering the three levels of deafness described above, they needed to unite more, perhaps banding with all levels of "staff" to develop more power. In his opinion, this meant that they should unionize as a collective staff group, since it seemed that the faculty union was listened to by the board and administration. "If you don't have some kind of muscle," he asserted, "they aren't going to pay attention to you."

Lending Voice: Governance Issues

As the comment above indicates, discussions of decision making and voice of a specific employee group in higher education often led to consideration of governance options and how they might enhance or detract from voice. Among the three institutions

studied, I had an interesting array: one college grouped all classified staff together in one "association" which had just impressed its board with sheer numbers and won a lucrative employment contract for staff; another institution had organized all staff into one union a few years ago, but still struggled with the problem with low pay; and another college--which had separate senates for general staff and an upper-level specialized category--had recently begun to consider unionizing together, since each group felt decisions were being made before they had a chance to voice their concerns.

Interestingly, when I analyzed interviewees' perspectives on voice and governance, I found that their feelings of being heard and valued did not hinge on the presence of a staff union, per se. Rather, what seemed important was, first, involvement by specialists in some type of collective body (which might or might not be a union) such that a sense of group identity and power was established, and second, administrative responsiveness to their ideas and suggestions, which often helped specialists to feel listened to and empowered.

Strength in numbers. Strong staff involvement in governance groups was demonstrated at two of the institutions. The association (not *union*) of classified staff at College of Suburbia (COS) represented 15 levels of classified staff. Degreed staff, including the people interviewed for this study, were usually represented in the upper strata of this system. One specialist stressed the influence the association had wielded in recent contract negotiations:

> The nice thing that happened, in this classified contract we negotiated, well, administration gave us the shaft. It was a horrible contract. We rallied the troops—we, again, me being a part of it. I had 150 people show up at a board meeting, cheering and yelling. I mean, it was good. And

> two days later, they settled with what we wanted. We got good contracts. Very good negotiating team. I wasn't on that, but—people were mad about it, and instead of bitching and moaning and lalala about it, they showed up at the board meeting, and they tripled the [association] membership as a result of this, and then we did kind of a followup to that, and then we had about 100 show up to thank the board.

At Urban Metro College, all six levels of classified staff had unionized recently. As one professional staff member at UMC noted, "I think it has helped. . . not so much for the raises. . . . I think they're forced to deal with issues more on a formal basis; certain things can't be dismissed or ignored, and eventually they have to be discussed." At both COS and UMC, having a representative body that commanded attention and established some sort of due process or formal listening mechanisms appeared to enhance the audibility of the voice of staff.

I spoke with several individuals (including some who were not at COS or UMC) who cited benefits to banding together as a broad "staff" constituency. For example, Frank felt this strategy would help staff obtain bargaining power similar or equivalent to that of the faculty. He mused:

> I think the general perception is that classified would always like to have more power, and I think they are represented, but I think they would like to be represented even more. Faculty carries a bigger club. . . . They have a stronger lobby, I think, at this point, and the board listens to them and generally gives them what they want. . . . I think they're skilled at being a consolidated body that comes up with reasonable demands that can be met.

Matthew echoed this sentiment, saying, "They [the administration] do not mess with faculty. They negotiate and stuff like that." From the perspective of many of the specialists interviewed, combining different "categories" of staff together into one

comprehensive governance body enhanced the perceived "clout" of staff with key decision makers.

In order to increase their power and collective voice, the specialist-only senate at TCCC was considering banding together with other staff at the college into one, large governance group. One TCCC interviewee shared a copy of an e-mail that had gone out to specialists recently, lamenting the lack of volunteers for senate officer positions, and indicating that the problem might be a lack of common purpose and a feeling of apathy among specialists about joining a representative group. The memo writer elaborated:

> We still do not have a vice chairperson yet. Since this is becoming a difficult situation, I have to let you know about some options that are being discussed. . . . We have been discussing the possibility of combining our senates into one "support staff senate." This is not an easy thing to contemplate. . . . I do not like the idea of specialists losing our separate identity, but as in the situation of no vice chair, we are looking at the possibility of losing our representation, our voice in governance matters altogether. . . . This means we will have absolutely no say in what happens to us next year regarding not only salary issues but things like security issues and diversity issues.

This staff member and others at TCCC wondered whether joining the specialists with the rest of the college's staff would provide them with more of an advocacy base, by virtue of sheer numbers. One of the interviewees there, who seemed to have harbored feelings similar to Mark's about being grouped with more blue-collar employees, had had a change of heart. He said, "At one time, I probably would have been against it, because I thought, 'Well, specialists, we're more important.' I don't look at it like that anymore."

Staff conglomerate drawbacks. Despite these benefits, some specialists indicated that there were disadvantages to grouping all staff in one, wide-ranging employee category. The biggest drawback focused on what some specialists saw as a "different mindset"

about work among members of broad staff groups: one that stressed "job" over "career." Mark said this mindset was most evident when all-staff groups gathered to discuss what their priorities were:

> The classified group, 600 of us, full and part time, 600 of us, when you get up to level tens and above, there are fewer classifieds at these levels. Those voices from people who would want to have more control of the college aren't being heard, because the broader number of classified are saying, "No, pay and benefits are our number one and number two issues."

Disparities in views about "job" and career" often revolved around compensation issues. I spoke with several specialists, for instance, who said that because they were dedicated professionals, they did not need the built-in, automatic raises that these groups' employment contracts had ensured for all. They resented them, in fact. Beth expressed her dissatisfaction with this feature of her staff contract as follows:

> I would rather have my increases based on my performance rather than an overall increase. I feel that it just doesn't work for me and I think it just breeds mediocrity within the staff. When you know you're going to get this salary whether you keep your head above water or you do exceptional work, you're still going to get the same salary increase, which I just don't think is productive. . . . [It is not] one that solicits good performance. I certainly see the advantages of it, but from my standpoint I would prefer not.

Another specialist, Lucy, described the split in staff opinion regarding this issue:

> Since we're in a union, we all get the same raise every year. I know a lot of people feel like they want to be able to get merit raises, rather than just the same raise as everybody else. And that really is a union issue, and I think the administrators, rightfully, can point their finger at the union when people complain about that. Of course, there's people on the other side saying that they want to stay in the union because they want that guaranteed raise. . . . I mean, that's both sides. There are people on the staff that feel both ways on that.

Administrative responsiveness indicators. Regardless of the type or presence of a staff governance structure, interviewees emphasized that administrative responsiveness to their concerns strengthened their voice and made them feel valued at their institutions. Interestingly, two indicators of responsiveness raised were those which several respondents *had* experienced--in salary and support for professional development-- while the third indicator was one they *wished* they would see--concrete proof that administrators had listened to their input.

For the specialists, the most salient response that administrators could give was in terms of salary and benefits, which was demonstrated at College of Suburbia, for example. Earlier, a specialist at COS described the "strength in numbers" which netted a lucrative employment contract for the college's staff. Staff members underscored the fiscal commitment that administrators had made to staff, which confirmed their value to the institution and enhanced morale. As one COS specialist told me, " I like what I do. I feel I get paid well to do it, and I'm happy with it."

A second form of responsiveness that was appreciated by staff was administrative acknowledgement of their needs for mobility and professional development, which I discuss at length in the latter half of this chapter.

The third indicator of administrative responsiveness was one that emerged through negative cases that several interviewees presented, and through hypothetical advice they offered in response to a question about how administrators could improve specialist morale. In Chapter Five, specialists described the "faulty pipeline" of communication that ran between committees they participated in and the administrators, mostly

evidenced by lack of administrative responsiveness to their input. The interviewees offered numerous examples of feeling not listened to by administrators. When I analyzed the interview data more closely to find accounts of positive experiences of administrative responsiveness that were not fiscal, my search came up empty. Yet references to listening and open communication were made by many staff when I asked them how administrators could act to improve their morale. Sometimes, there were very simple ways that administrators could avoid the perception that administrators were not listening, as Betty detailed:

> It just seems like, if you make a suggestion, or something like that, it just gets buried, and you never hear anything else about it. And that's what I was talking about, is acting on some small suggestions, and maybe publicizing that they did something. . . . Let us know what you're doing. We do have the ___, which is a monthly publication for all the employees. . . . But you know, that could be used as a tool that would publicize something about, you know, if somebody had made a suggestion of something to improve, and they would say, "We acted upon this suggestion, and this is the outcome," or something like that. Because I'm sure that they do act on them, but we don't know that they do.

The master's prepared professional staff I interviewed were split on the question of whether they had a voice in their institutions, and their experiences in this regard often had to do with access to--and response from--administrators who listened to and valued their input. The specialists identified key governance issues which were important in lending voice to this employee group: the sense of power and identity which were fostered by involvement in representative employee groups, and specific indicators of administrative responsiveness.

A Sense of Importance

The priority that administrators place upon listening to a particular group may hinge in part on the relative importance they attribute to that group. The master's prepared professional staff interviewed for this study had some provocative insights about their relative importance to their institutions. Some felt that they were not very important to their colleges, while others felt quite differently. In this section, I discuss both assessments, and also examine an intriguing link that was made by some interviewees between their level of importance and the mission of their colleges.

Unimportant and Unempowered

About a quarter of the specialists I interviewed rated their importance to their institutions quite low, and they were spread across all three institutions studied. As I came to understand, these low self ratings reflected the distance these specialists felt from the core functions of the institution. For example, Jeannette, who worked with public aid recipients in short-term career programs, felt strongly that the main mission of her college was educating transfer students, and said of her work, "I don't think it's very important. No, not really." Later in the interview, she elaborated on her view:

> I feel like, mainly because I work with those adult ed students, it seems to be it's somewhat not as important as some of the other areas. You have to look at where people are working—are they grants, are they hard money? . . . And I think you'll find, the ones that do, that are working under the hard money, are in direct services to students who are going to transfer. I mean, that's all the colleges. I have worked at many of them, and it's the same.

Mark, who worked in business development, expressed a similar perspective:

> Now you may get a different opinion when you talk to another classified supervisor who works closer with faculty, or who works closer with

> students. That's the main difference, because we don't actually have that contact with the credit-hour student. . . . As you take a look at the college, say the things that are important to the college, [my areas of work] are generally lower on the list than the rest of the functions the college does.

Important and Empowered

The majority of specialists interviewed for this study had positive views of their importance to their institutions. Many felt important because of the impact they knew they had on students, while others knew they were playing a key role in the future of their institution or department. A few believed they had individual abilities and potential which made them uniquely valuable to their colleges, and some cited the more collective value of specialist staff in helping their colleges to function.

Assessing importance: Impact on students. Frank made a distinction between the possible importance of his department's work to the life of the college (somewhat low), and its importance to and impact on the students it served (very high). Likewise, Betty, the nursing lab supervisor, immediately thought of the students whose lives she touched through her work, and told of how they made it clear to her that she was very important:

> I think it's very interesting, in that, with the nursing program, we have a pinning ceremony. It's usually the Friday before graduation. This is where the fourth semester students receive their college pin. We always have the president or the vice president speak at the pinning ceremony. It's held in the evening and the whole family comes, this kind of thing. Of course, (name), the director of the nursing program, always speaks. And, for the last 6 years, the students have always asked me to speak. Those are the speakers. It's a must, that the director and the president or the vice president of the college speak, but the students themselves have asked me to speak at every one. . . . So if you look from the students' point of view, I do believe that they feel that I am very important to the program.

Indeed, Betty received further affirmation of her importance to students when she met alumni of the program:

> Just meeting ex-students, and . . . I know that I'm one person they'll never forget, and they all say I had a big impact in their life, and the way they do things. Even now, since I've been here almost nine years, there's a lot of students that have come through. It's amazing too, how many students, if they're in the area or at the college, will always come up and speak to me and visit with me.

In a similar vein, Beth viewed her importance in light of the individualized attention she gave each student, and what this meant to their accessing higher education:

> I would rank [my importance] maybe at about a seven [out of ten]. And the reason being. . . one thing that I really like that is unique as far as from what I understand from other community colleges and their testing programs is that, when they are done testing, I meet with every student. And I go through their scores with them and I talk to them about what their scores mean, their percentile ranking, what their raw score means, the class that they placed into. And I think that that's really important and I would hate for us to get away from that interaction with students after getting their scores. . . . I also want them. . . to have a good perception of where they're at and what their options are. . . if they set goals for themselves which are attainable, and challenging for them yet attainable, then we can help them out. . . that they can do it. And that is important to me.

Ted also assessed his importance in terms of how his work benefited students. As he put it:

> I consider [my importance] an eight, because I think the students are what's important, and I think we make a difference in the students that we work with. I think that for the administration, it's important for them that things run smoothly, and it's important that we provide the service without many problems.

Assessing importance: Impact on the institution. While many of the specialists interviewed assessed their importance in light of the impact they had on students, several others believed they were important to their community colleges for other reasons. In general, these individuals focused on the positive impact they--and occasionally,

specialists in general--had on their institutions as fundraisers, community stewards, and highly effective specialists in their area of expertise.

For example, Willis and Roy evaluated their importance in terms of the positive results they produced for their colleges. Willis, who was active on behalf of the college's athletic association in addition to his equipment management duties, noted, "Because of what I do. . . and what we generate here, I would have to be high. . . I'd rate it eight, only because of my contact with the community." Roy, a talented grantwriter, knew that his ability to bring money into the college was valued:

> I would probably rate it eight; eight or nine. . . . Well, from a monetary perspective, some of our biggest grants are the adult ed grants, and the ___ community college grants, and so the work that I and others help put into that ends up representing quite a lot of money each year, and so I think that funds a lot of programs, helps a lot of students. I think that's an important aspect.

Roy also noted that his professional authority in the area of disability access was important to the administration, in no small measure because it helped keep them in compliance with federal and state laws:

> With ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act compliance], we try to provide accommodations for students as best we can at the lowest possible cost, and also to avoid lawsuits and investigations by the Office of Civil Rights. Knock on wood, so far, things have been. . . you know, we've managed to do that quite well.

Taking a slightly different tack, Ben's perception of his own importance resided in other things he was doing at his college, and the <u>potential</u> utility he had to his school:

> I think right now, I'd be at the upper end of that scale, probably an eight or nine. I boldly would even say ten, because I think—probably eight, realistically—but I think because of my diverse background, I could probably go in any department and do good things. I think working on the

> doctorate is very valuable, because I'm putting my research to work here. I don't have to, but I choose to. I'm going out of my box.

Finally, Angie shared her colleagues' focus on the individual work they did as what provided them with a sense of importance, but she also described how the work that all staff members did was like a glue that held her college together:

> I think that of the three constituencies--Administration, Faculty and Classified--the one constituency that if they all walked out the doors, the college would have to close, well, if all the Classified would one day say, "We're not going to go to work," the doors couldn't open, and the college could not go on. There wouldn't be a day, I don't think it could happen. I think that the classified staff as a whole are the backbone of the college. They keep it all going together. They are supporting a lot of big decision makers or the Faculty doing their job and all that kind of stuff. If Faculty wouldn't come in for a day, we could keep the doors open, but obviously the education wouldn't be going on. If the Administrators didn't come in for a day or two, we'd be fine (laughter). They are making long range big decisions. There is one group that if they said, "We're not coming in for one week," I don't see how the institution could go on for that week. We'd have to shut down. The backbone, the day to day serving the students, implementing all these decisions--that is done by the Classified Staff, and done real well.

Link to Mission

What Angie hinted at was something other interviewees were even more specific about when they assessed their own importance to their institutions--the relationship between their college's mission and the role they played in carrying it out. I have already related accounts of staff who felt their work was not important because it was removed from what they saw as the main mission of their colleges. Several professional staff interviewees who rated their own importance highly did so precisely because they believed their work was highly connected to their college's mission.

Ben, for one, saw his importance as being linked to a broader institutional goal:

> I think one of the things our office does, we do a lot of work with clubs and organizations on program planning and development. We do leadership functions. We do citizenship development. If you look at our college mission on the back of my business card, and the bigger one, even more so, we really tie in to all of those things... We started thinking more that leadership is going to be more valuable in the long run than, we're killing ourselves doing all this club development things, and they're not getting anything out of it. Well, if we did it the other way around, teach them the skills, then they're going to practice that in their clubs and organizations. That's what we do. It's like the classroom, somewhat. The service learning model, if you will. You're getting credit for things other than what's in the textbook. You're learning things that are going to be more valuable in the long run.

Stacy and Emma both seemed to view the community college's mission as one of serving a broad constituency of students, with access to education as the guiding principle. Because of this, they both viewed their own jobs as vital. Stacy talked about her work in the school's writing center:

> I'd want to say, being a community college, I'd probably put my position more at a 7. If I was doing the same thing at a 4-year college it would be lower. I think tutoring is a lot of what a community college is, what makes it different from a 4-year college. Because it goes along a lot with accessibility. Making the classes more accessible to students. If they can get extra help then they can be taking classes and succeeding in classes more easily than if they didn't get the tutoring, for example.

Emma knew that without people like her, some students would not get to college in the first place; she felt strongly that it was the community college's mission to reach out to such individuals:

> [Importance] to the life of the college? I would say ten, extremely important, because for one, the students will be coming here. It's like we are already representing [this] college to the junior high and the high school students around here. So they have already encountered [this] college through us.

In addition, Emma, the pre-college student specialist, saw the community college, and her work in one, as part of a greater social good--that of providing opportunities for hope and for life-changing experiences that could alter the fabric of society. She spoke of "breaking the cycle of poverty in America," and when asked what the community college's role was in doing so, Emma answered, "Equal opportunity education."

Most of the specialists interviewed for this study perceived their work as being important to their colleges, either because of the impact they had on students or the impact they had on the institution. Assessments of their importance were strongly linked to specialists' perceptions of institutional mission: the greater proximity one's work had to the perceived institutional mission, the higher one rated the importance of his or her work.

Status

As satisfying as the specialists found their work, and as much as they knew they were making a difference in the lives of students, there was still, for many, an awareness of a hierarchy that existed among community college employees--with administrators at the top, then faculty, then staff--including those staff who held advanced degrees and who were perceived as being professionals in their fields. To understand professional staff perceptions of their status in their respective colleges, I examine their perspectives in three thematic areas: their views of the hierarchy itself, their perceptions of administrators, and their perceptions of faculty.

The Community College Hierarchy

The specialists interviewed for this study provided compelling descriptions of the community college employee hierarchy as they experienced it. Some also questioned staff's position on this hierarchy, vis-a-vis their accounts of the level of specialization and professionalism of their work.

Matthew was very clear on the rank order that existed in his institution when he explained, "What they do is they label administrators most important, and then faculty, and the technical people, with dirty hands—if you do something where your hands get dirty, then you're always going to be on the bottom in education." Marcia, who believed a hierarchy was present in her institution, likened her college to a jungle:

> I guess I would say [this college] is sort of like a jungle (laughing). They weren't kidding when they said, "It's a jungle out there." And I say that in terms of the growth, because the college has grown immensely and it's kind of like in some aspects, choked off some of the good parts, you know, that it is overgrown. I remember when I first started at the college and part of the classified staff, we frequently were reinforced that the classified staff was as valuable to the college as the faculty. . . . That was a frequent message that came across to us, that we were the first line of contact with students in most cases and that we were valued and that seemed to be a reoccurring message and I think there is a core of old timers here that still kind of carry that message and still feel like they have an obligation to students and also that you're not needed here if students aren't here, so they are really your reason for being here you serve them as well as you can. . . . I think the growth of the college has choked off that approach.

When asked to incorporate the employees of the college into the metaphor, Marcia's image of a hierarchy became more apparent:

> Well, I'm certainly not the lion. That I think would be the upper level administration. I'll use the terms, "the ones that can kind of scare everyone" into doing—"That's what I want done." . . . So I would say that's probably the king of the jungle, [that] would be the lion. I guess I'd

> be a monkey. (laughing). Swinging around from place to place. Hiding when you can. If I were the monkey, then I don't know what to say the students were, so maybe I'd be a little bigger than that and they would be the monkeys because they seem to be the ones who are always so busy. . . . I think it would be very hard to focus on a description of the specialist. Because I would have to rely on my own experience to describe that. I think the specialists somehow get lost in the shuffle. A little less redeeming.

Stacy also saw her college as a multi-level society, which she likened to a "caste system," where "people are too aware of their social status at all times." This caste system also seemed to affect interactions among employees:

> [Y]our upper level administrators won't talk to people like me who are staff members. They need the lower level administrators to talk to us so they can tell us what the higher person had to say. And some administrators, you'll walk down the hall and they'll be fine and they'll say hi to you, but other ones won't give you the time of day. My boss's boss, I've been working here for 6 years, and it's only been maybe within the last year that he finally says hi to me. I worked here for a good 5 years and he wouldn't even say hi to me because I was just too much beneath him. . . . We are lower class people who do a lot of work to help the upper class ones, but we don't get any recognition for it, basically.

Frank emphasized how low status in one's institution could affect morale, saying, "I think the lower down you are on the food chain, classified staff, then you're probably less happy, just because you have more people telling you what to do." Matthew offered perhaps the most vivid depiction of the low status of staff on campus:

> A metaphor for our positions, as specialists... There was one of these professional growth things—you know, they get somebody to come in, you know, "Getting Along with Your Peers," one of those kind of things. . . . So they had us in groups, and they said, "Well, come up with a flag to describe you." I always use this as my metaphor. Toilet paper. Seriously. You don't think about it, but when you want it, it'd better be there, and as much as you want.

Some interviewees, aware of status distinctions among employee groups, were at times baffled by the disparity between the responsibility level of their work and their status in the institution. As described in Chapter Four, several of the specialists had supervisory, administrative, and fiscal responsibilities that made them feel like administrators, but for one reason or another, they were not designated as such. Some reported to vice presidents, or to an administrator who did. They knew the quality of their own work, and the professionalism which they brought to their departments, yet they were also aware of the connotation of the label "staff" or "classified staff" in the employee ladder. As one specialist explained:

> My feeling is that I'm, for all practical purposes, except in title, an administrator. You know, budgetary, supervisory, and so on. That's how I conduct myself. Is that how everybody else conducts themselves? Do they really see themselves as a classified person? Because I don't. I'm not "classified." . . . It doesn't mean anything. It's a designation of convenience to the college.

Staff Perceptions of Administrators

When specialists described their institutions as hierarchies of a sort, they often discussed those who occupied other strata, specifically, administrators and faculty. Their own status in their institutions was not something that could be considered in isolation; being situated in a "place" meant acknowledging those whose actions and attitudes helped do the situating. One group they spoke of was administrators, whom they viewed with feelings of either allegiance or alienation.

In some ways, because of the administrative nature of their duties, some interviewees felt more akin to administrators than to faculty. Mark noted, "Administrators probably appreciate us a little more because they truly understand the support function and the

nature of probably the [staff level] tens and unders." Yet while some of their job duties might be similar to those of administrators, the specialists' status in their institutions was not the same. Specialists knew that while they carried out many administrative tasks, they did not have official administrative authority in their institutions. Accordingly, most understood that having administrators around (and being on good terms with them) was helpful in situations in which a more advanced title was seen as more powerful--or was required to move processes along. As one specialist commented:

> We could do it without the dean, I'm sure, but the difficulty would be, then, how do we represent our needs to the others? The three of us (supervisory staff) would have to get together and go as a group to carry all that weight.

Another specialist described the authority she had to do almost everything needed for her job--except sign her own name on paperwork:

> Technically, I don't have the authority to sign the contracts but I do make all the arrangements and sign his (director's) name occasionally. . . . I can make commitments for the college. You know, verbal commitments, and his name will be on the contract, although I do everything short of an actual contract in terms of expenditures of funds. I can write up whatever letters need to be done and sign off on whatever forms. Our office is set up so that (director's name) has the final sign off—has to sign off on all of that. . . . It's just kind of, once I've signed it and given it to him, he's not likely to challenge things.

Other participants, however, felt at odds with administrators, far removed from them on the college's "food chain," and moving in different orbits in their daily work. Recall Stacy's previous description of a caste system, and of administrators who did not communicate directly with staff, giving staff the impression that staff were beneath them. Such a sense of separation between staff and administrators often led to misperceptions

by both parties, and a mindset which wasted mental energy and damaged morale. As Lucy told me:

> I think there is an "us versus them," staff versus administrators, and I think that's probably, you can't avoid it to a certain extent. How bad it gets, I guess depends on the place you're at and the things, the issues that you're involved in. But I feel like it's a little more than normal here. And so, I think that probably related to morale a little bit, because people use up a lot of their energy in the "us versus them." And that's both sides. They both seem to be using up a lot of their energy. . . . I think a lot of the administrators see, especially some of the leaders of the union as not wanting to work within, and not wanting to look at what's good for the students, and a lot of the staff members see the administrators as being very inflexible, and putting the needs of the staff as a low priority and rewarding themselves and not rewarding the staff members. And I see both sides using up too much energy on this.

The specialists in this study saw administrators at their institutions as occupying the upper rung of the employee hierarchy. Some of the specialists who saw their job duties as being administrative in nature saw their work as being similar to that of administrators, who were nonetheless needed for advocacy and signoff authority. A small number of interviewees had little interaction with administrators at their colleges, leading to feelings of separation and alienation.

Staff Perceptions of Faculty

Consideration of employee hierarchies at their colleges often led interviewees to discuss another group: the faculty. For the most part, specialists' perceptions focused on the separation between faculty and staff, the messages conveyed to staff through some of their interactions with faculty, salary inequity issues, and how staff worked to maintain positive morale despite perceived inequities.

While, in some respects, staff expected administrators to wield some power over them (simply by virtue of their administrative authority), what made less sense to many study participants was the much higher status that faculty had on their campuses--and how this influenced the faculty's power in governance, their self-perceptions, and their interactions with staff. Mark, who felt more like an administrator than a "staff" person, mused, "There is a huge, inseparable gulf between faculty and classified." From Mark's perspective, faculty had more status than staff because of their proximity to what most people perceived as the core function of the school: classroom teaching. He elaborated:

> The faculty here, they walk the earth and it trembles. People move out of their way. Money opens up and comes to them—whatever you want to do. . . . Because we're a college. That's what it's here to do. Damn it, this is what provides—without the faculty, we'd be nothing. Go ahead and ask any one of them—they'll tell you. (laughter)

Margaret echoed Mark's perception, and the faculty-centric universe they inhabited:

> My husband taught for 32 years, and he would tell you as a teacher, that they could throw all the administrators out and just sit him under a tree with his students, like Aristotle, and that's where the job gets done. They don't see the need for support staff, and all the administrative people that push that paper and pencils around. Faculty don't necessarily see it.

Several interviewees were quick to say, however, that not all faculty held such views of their own importance. Don, the campus police chief, had had mostly positive relationships with faculty, including those outside the criminal justice department:

> I've had no problem with other faculty. We get along real good. I enjoy talking to them. I hope that they feel we're talking on the same level. I try and make it that way. . . . I do address the faculty at the beginning of almost each semester, and you know, if there are any new changes of things, you know, we're changing things around, "If you need any help, we're always there. Just give us a call." They call on us.

Stacy told of her experiences interacting with faculty:

> The faculty, it really varies individually. There will be some that will really appreciate you and stand up for you and go to bat for you and things like that, but then there will be others that are just, for example, I was asked to attend one meeting with some faculty and there were just a couple staff members and the rest of them were faculty. And we got there and one faculty member was there and she was like, "Why are they here?" So you do feel kind of that-- like you're on the outside with some of them, but not all of them. . . . As far as faculty goes, I would tend to say maybe about 40% of them are that way where they really don't think that much of staff. And also part timers, part time faculty, are looked down upon. Very much. But the other I'd say 60%, you don't feel like you're on a different level so much.

Stacy also noted that, when some faculty behaved in ways that indicated they occupied a higher status level, such behavior bothered more egalitarian faculty. In a follow-up e-mail, she explained, "This not only brings specialist morale down, but also the morale of sympathetic faculty members. One [department] faculty member I'm close to gets very down on herself when she sees how unfairly I'm treated at times."

Aside from general status differences, several specialists raised the issue of a differential pay and benefits scale for faculty and staff. Perhaps no other issue provoked more ire among the specialists than this one. As one seasoned veteran acknowledged, "I'm only getting paid half of what faculty is getting paid, and yet I really need sometimes more of a background than the faculty." Earlier in this chapter, Barb explained that while she made decent money to live on, she found it irksome that faculty with equivalent education levels and years of experience earned significantly more than she did.[6] When I asked Barb to discuss her own morale, she replied:

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[6] The specialists' perceptions of the disparity between salaries of faculty and professional staff were not without foundation. The Illinois Community College Board (1999b) reports that 96.7% of full-time faculty hold 9-month appointments, with an average salary of $53,417, while 91.8% of non-teaching professional staff (including the work categories Professional/Technical, Academic Support, and Supervisory Staff) have 12-month contracts, with an average salary of $35,943. In Chapter One, I reported that 28.5% of non-

> [The disparity in pay and benefits] definitely [conveys a message] to classified staff. They get really worked up about that. They think the faculty is treated so much better than they are. And that most policies in the college are done to benefit the faculty. Faculty has a strong voice. Classified think they need a stronger voice too. Really the only reason I think they think that is because in the difference of what they are given in pay and benefits.

For Barb and other staff, the secret to maintaining decent morale was not to dwell on status and pay inequities between faculty and staff. Barb noted, "Those are the only things that if you think about it a lot, [that] could really irritate you, but I try not to think about it too much." Later she explained:

> I don't dwell on it, and a lot of classified staff dwell on it a little too much. Like I said, you took a job knowing what the benefits were and knowing what you were being offered so if you didn't like it you should really be comparing yourself to what somebody else is getting. You got an offer, you liked it, you took it. . . . I wouldn't have known what faculty was getting compared to what I'm getting as far as benefits and things like that, no. But I liked what they were offering me so I shouldn't be looking at somebody else and deciding that now I don't like what they are giving me because they are giving somebody else something better than me. . . . All you're trying to make happy in the world is yourself.

Beth and Angie also recognized inequities between faculty and staff, but chose to focus their energy on doing excellent work, and on doing what they could to effect future change for the better. Beth offered her perspective on people who complained about their situations:

> They just take their directives from their boss. They don't take an initiative to find out more or how they can get more involved. And I look at those people and I think, "Well, we can't always have our hands held through life." We kind of have to. . . instead of channeling our energy into

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teaching professional staff held master's degrees (ICCB, 1999a). Since the master's prepared specialists I interviewed usually occupied the upper strata of the staff classification systems at their colleges, I speculated that their salary might more closely approximate what ICCB identifies as the 75th percentile salary level for 12-month non-teaching professional staff, which was $38,279.

> complaining, let's try to figure out how we can change the situation to make it better. I guess that's the way I look at it. . . . Life is too short.

Angie seemed to feel the same way:

> I think if you look at it like, "That's not fair" all the time, then you can't move on. You have to say "I understand the system I'm working in." Either I can find something else or I'm not going to change anything, I'm not going to change the system, it's been here for a while. I love what I can do for students, how I can work with the college. I'm certainly able to get my ideas across and implement new programs and procedures. Forget about that. It's not worth the energy it takes to dwell on it. . . . You'd never get anything done. . . . This college is set up this way. It's the way it is. I like what I do. I feel I get paid well to do it, and so I'm happy with it.

The eighteen specialists who participated in this study were well aware of the employee hierarchies that existed in their community colleges, and just which rung they and their fellow professional staff members occupied in them. In the culture of the community colleges under study, the actions and attitudes of administrators and faculty had much to do with establishing the sense of "place" they felt. Many questioned the existing structure, but felt uncertain how to change it. Those who maintained positive morale, though they were aware of their lesser status, chose instead to focus on excellence in their work.

Mobility

For many of the interviewees, talk about their status in their institutions led naturally to discussions of their potential to change their status-- often through career mobility. Most of the specialists studied saw their work as a career, not a job, and they received a great deal of satisfaction from doing their work well. Most of them enjoyed considerable professional autonomy, and were provided opportunities to try out new ideas and exercise

their creativity. Like other professionals, they also looked ahead and wondered what sort of career path their institutions could offer them. As I explored this topic with interviewees, they spoke of their futures at their colleges, the mobility options they had within the staff system, and whether they felt they had opportunities to move into faculty or administrative positions.

Career Path Issues

Despite the satisfaction that many of the specialists experienced with their work, some believed they seldom had an appropriate position to advance to, while others feared that they had already reached the highest staff classification level possible at their institutions. The lack of opportunities to advance upward on a "career ladder" was often frustrating and demoralizing for those I interviewed. Mark spoke to this point as follows:

> Right now, in my opinion, with a minimum amount of effort, I could maintain good to excellent personnel reviews every year, and as long as the grant kept coming through, I would have this job forever. Other people who are not grant employees have their jobs—guaranteed jobs forever. I mean, the ___ department, the handcuffs are even more golden. Now you're working at a 13 or 14, and you're guaranteed by the college lifetime employment, so long as you don't screw up. I don't know how much of that is out there, do these folks get their master's, get their doctorates, but they never move out of their position? They're just there.

Margaret also related a feeling of being stuck in one place. As she told me:

> There's very little movement. There's nowhere for me to go, for instance. . . . It doesn't happen. . . . Only in the last couple of years have I seen lateral movement. That was not something that happened when I came here. It was very, very rare for somebody to move anything. . . . A lot of jobs are just phased out by attrition, and someone else takes over that duty. . . . What I've been seeing in the last year or two is a strong message from the board of trustees and the administration on down, that administrative posts will be eliminated. . . . What little movement is when somebody has left, maybe an associate dean will move up into a dean position.

The professional staff interviewed for this study tended to occupy the upper ranks of the staff stratification systems at their colleges, by virtue of their advanced degrees and their specialization in an area of each college's operations. Because they started at upper strata, they tended to hit the "glass ceiling" at their institutions relatively quickly, which sometimes led to frustration. Ted elaborated on his experience with "topping out":

> There's about six or seven of us—well, [the classification system] goes up to a 17, and after that it's administrative. So there are a number of us that are 17's, and I know there's a group that there's four people that all have the same type of job, and they tried to have the job looked at and they refused to look at them, so they said, "We'll go through the [appropriate] process if you want your job looked at," and they told them they can't even go through the process, because they've peaked. So they feel there's nowhere to go. . . . When we did this—well, here's the frustrating part, that the way it's supposed to be examined, if they felt someone should be higher, they could add an 18th or 19th step. But now they're saying, "No." But that's why we did this, because we were told we could do that. If someone new should be hired, then we could do an 18 or 19, but now they're saying that 17 is peaked. But that's not in writing, it's not official, they just told this group that they can't do it.

Even specialists who were very positive about the work they did recognized their limited mobility. For example, Angie noted, "There is only one level above mine, but there is not a whole lot of room to go there." Margaret described the dilemma of professional staff in a similar way: "[They] are approaching the top, and they have frozen salaries. . . . [They] keep hitting that ceiling all the time."

Options within the Staff System

At all three of the institutions included in this study, staff employees were classified into a number of levels or ranges. The clearest way that they could achieve mobility while remaining staff was to advance into a higher classification level, either by having their current positions reclassified or by moving into different jobs on campus. Another

solution, although rare, was to have an additional classification layer added for those who, like Ted above, were "topping out."

Some staff who truly enjoyed their work and wanted to stay at their colleges opted to work within the existing system to achieve status change, likely for professional and financial reasons. Within a tiered employee classification system, this usually meant filing paperwork describing one's work, with the goal of demonstrating that the tasks and responsibilities of one's actual job (which might or might not match the one on the original job description) were actually similar to other jobs which had a higher classification in the college's system.

Going through this process was not, however, simple. Matthew recounted his frustration with the reclassification process:

> There's this really convoluted form you've got to fill out, and then you submit it to see if you can get upgraded. I did it this past Labor Day weekend; I was sitting there screaming, and my wife said, "Shut up and do it." She didn't say it at first, because she's sort of into that, kind of like "educationese" stuff. Well, you've got to use a lot of action verbs. So anyway, I got it all written out, and I had to go back over and submit it. I don't know if I'll find out whether I got reclassified or not [by the time I look over my interview transcript]. . . . This form is such that it's like, "Describe the purpose of this position in one concise sentence," And then, "Describe the objective of this position in one concise sentence." What's the difference between purpose and objective? See, I just don't have time for that stuff. Like I told my wife, goals, objectives, it's the same thing. I know there's a difference, and it drives me nuts.

Other specialists expressed frustration when their efforts toward reclassification were thwarted. As Stacy told me:

> I think specialists. . . in the grades, it goes from 12 up to 18 or so. I'm at the bottom rung of that too, I'm a 13. You could apply for a position that was a higher pay level within specialist. . . . My position was up for upgrade twice and was turned down both times. It's pretty much known

> that you can try for an upgrade, but you're not going to get it. It's very rare that they're going to reclassify a position. They have a couple times here which is also kind of what makes me a little bit negative about it just because there have been a couple positions in the department that they have upgraded, but still haven't upgraded mine and the [other] center specialist.

There were other forms of "within-the-ranks" mobility that specialists I interviewed had tried, with some success. Staff at COS, for example, could apply for "in-house transfer" by applying for a different staff position with a higher classification grade. One COS specialist described this mobility option as follows:

> There's a separate form for filing an application for that. There's a classified application and then there's an in-house transfer application, because you're already classified and it's kind of a parallel move. Those people generally do get considered above others because they can apply earlier; they can apply before the job's posted by a few days. Oftentimes, you know, you want to hire somebody who knows how the institution works, and they're moving from one administrative assistant to another, so they already kind of know the job, so I'm sure that they would be the preference just due to the fact that you don't have to train them.

Several specialists at UMC told me that the institution had recently added another rung to many of their career ladders by adding another classification level for staff work. According to one specialist I interviewed there. A sixth level had been just added in the last union contract.

> [It] was an initiative by [the accrediting body], again because they wanted to see more professional classified staff. So some people were moved into that higher level. . . . These are still all classified staff employees, but they wanted to add another level--a sixth level that represented a professional staff [group] to be recognized, basically.

Another specialist at the same college who had received the upgrade told his story:

> There was, during the last negotiation, [a provision in the contract that] each area could submit people for adjustments, and so it ended up being maybe six or nine people that are not all from the same area. . . . some

> adjustments were made. . . . I was in one of the groups, yeah. . . . I think it was one letter up--oh, not one letter, one Roman numeral--higher, or whatever. There were a couple that, I think, were two or three numbers higher. . . . It was nice to get the adjustment.

Ted, who worked at a different college, wished he had been afforded such an opportunity. At his institution, there had been talk of adding another staff level for persons who were soon "topping out," but such talk had stopped recently. He elaborated:

> Usually, that's another committee I'm on, the reclassification committee, and we actually looked at two people who are 17's, and they were upped to administrative. But now this group is saying, "You can't try it." . . . But actually, I'm going to try it, to see what happens, because I'm a 17. So I'm going to go through the process and see if they tell me I can't, because it's not in writing. . . . There's someone just a week ago that was talking to me about it, one of those four people, and she said she likes it here, so she's not going to leave, but she said she is very frustrated, because they've tried different things as a group, as individuals, and they're just told there's nothing they can do. They won't even look at them.

The mobility options for staff within the existing system included position reclassification, transfer to another position which had a higher grade, adding a new top layer to the classification tier and, in rare cases, recatgeorizing an upper-level staff position as administrative. Most of the specialists I interviewed were well aware of these options.

Moving into Faculty Ranks

Moving up, one way or another, in the ranks of staff was seen as a way for staff to achieve some mobility at their institutions. But there was still the nagging matter of the lower status on campus of anyone called "staff," no matter what grade they were. In the hierarchy of the community college, real upward mobility for many meant moving into faculty or administrative positions. Regarding the first area, interviewees described what

having opportunities for adjunct teaching meant to them, and speculated on their chances of being considered for full-time faculty positions.

Opportunities for adjunct teaching. Since being faculty was seen as a higher status classification than staff, it would follow that being termed "faculty," even on an adjunct level, could be seen as a form of moving, or at least stretching, upward. In my description of specialist work in Chapter Four, I noted that several of the specialists interviewed taught at their colleges as adjunct faculty. Examples included Roy's developmental English classes, Ted's GED teaching, Ben's "Great Books and Leadership" course, Stacy's composition courses, and Don's criminal justice classes. For these and other specialists in the study, teaching at their colleges was something that they not only enjoyed, but something which put their professional expertise to a different use in ways that supplemented their income.

For staff who got to teach--and for those who did not--the real issue was not the extra money, but what an adjunct teaching appointment meant for them as a small-scale mobility opportunity: the opportunity to adopt the higher status title, "faculty," albeit adjunct, and to receive recognition from others that they were professionals with something to teach. This was made most clear by negative cases in the sample--the persons who, for one reason or another, wanted to teach at their colleges but were not given the opportunity. For example, Mark, who held the same degree (MBA) as his faculty counterparts on the academic side of the school, felt that his "staff" designation held him back from being considered for teaching. Matthew, who held a M.S. in design

degree and not the M.F.A. preferred by his institution's art department, held an adjunct teaching position--but at another nearby college.

Some staff saw adjunct teaching as an opportunity to prove one's worth as a teacher, in order to be considered for a full time faculty position in the future, should one become available. As Beth told me:

> I feel like if I want to go into teaching, I would need to start by being an adjunct faculty member--teaching an evening here or there or getting some experience before I would seriously be considered for a full time faculty position. And that is something I have thought about.

Becoming full-time faculty. Because of the increased salary, flexible work hours, better benefits, and higher professional status that they attributed to full-time faculty at their community colleges, many of the interviewees saw movement into such positions as a form of upward mobility--one which might or might not be realistic for them.

I asked interviewees, "If a faculty opening for which you felt you were qualified became available, do you feel you would be considered for the job?" Beth, Betty, and Marcia all replied, "I think so." Specialists at COS told me how their new employment contract for staff now included a clause stating that any qualified employee--not only faculty or administrators--could apply for faculty vacancies when they were posted. Don, the campus police chief who already taught part-time in criminal justice, believed that not only would he be considered, but that he might even be "one of the frontrunners, because we only have one individual who was a full-time faculty member that teaches in the criminal justice program." As he explained:

> He runs the show, and all of the other instructors are part time. Most of them are part time police officers—I mean, full-time police officers, part-time instructors. . . . Almost all of the instructors here, in the law

> enforcement section, are police officers with local departments or something. . . . [Would I apply] to teach? Yeah, I think I would give that a shot.

These accounts notwithstanding, a number of interviewees felt similarly to Mark that, despite their qualifications and experience, their specialized staff positions had hampered or would hamper their likelihood of being seriously considered for full-time faculty positions. Most attributed this to the perceived "stigma" of having been staff, or because the very specialization which made them good at their jobs seemed to have a "pigeonholing" effect. For instance, Stacy, who knew she would be qualified to apply for a faculty position in English, was not optimistic about her prospects of moving into a faculty role:

> Those who were around when I first got hired might remember that I have a master's, because they heard about it when I was first introduced to the English faculty. Those who realize I sometimes teach English [course number] would also figure it out. I really think that even if I applied for a full-time position, I don't think I'd get it, just because I do have this stigma on me that I am a staff member. I don't think that they would ever see me or accept me as one of them. I think that if I wanted a full-time [faculty] position, I would have to go to another college.

Ted held master's degrees in learning disabilities and in counseling. When asked if he would be considered a serious candidate for a faculty counseling position, he replied:

> It's hard to get rid of the faculty here, and they've had in the past year maybe four counselors leave, and I didn't apply. I thought about it but, no, I don't think I'd be looked at fairly. I think they see me in this role and I don't think they'd look at me fairly. They also feel, because I do counseling in my job, the counselors do, that they just refer me [students with disabilities] anyway. . . . I think I've been in this job too long. . . and I think that's where they see me.

Since Ted saw many of the functions of his job as being very similar to the counseling faculty at his college, he recently began the process of having his position recategorized from specialist staff to faculty. Because Ted really enjoyed his work and liked his institution, achieving more parity with his counseling faculty counterparts was, from his perspective, the only thing that stood in the way of true job satisfaction for him:

> I hope I don't sound too negative, because I love [this] college. My goal is to stay here. I really enjoy working with students, working with disabled students. My hope is that they can make my job faculty at some point, because I feel that probably the majority of what I do, once the semester is going, is handle problems with students, do counseling. So that's what my goal would be, and then if I could do whatever I wanted, I'd have someone else do the coordinating of services, and I would do the counseling of disabled. That would be my goal.

Whether part-time or full-time, opportunities to serve as faculty in their institutions were seen as one form of mobility for interested professional staff--but staff had varying opinions on the ease with which they could move into such positions. While policy supporting staff mobility to faculty ranks (such as that at COS) was perceived as helpful, there were also the factors of institutional culture, departmental politics, and personal qualifications to be considered.

Mobility to Administrative Positions

Since most specialists saw administrators as being at the top of the hierarchical ladder at their institutions, another way of changing their own status was to move into positions that were officially "administrative." Several interviewees felt that a move to administration was probably more likely for them than one to faculty, although there were a few respondents who expressed frustration that they were not being considered for such advancement opportunities. Specialists acknowledged the importance of the

doctorate for those who envisioned themselves advancing into administration. For a few, "moving up" also meant "moving out and on" to an administrative position at another institution.

Moving into administration. For several specialists, advancement to administration felt like a realistic goal to pursue. Because their jobs included many administrative-type duties, some specialists articulated views similar to those of Stacy, who told me, "I think a specialist would have a better opportunity to become an administrator than they would a faculty member, if you were trying between those two as a career path." Likewise, Angie noted, "I would think that [for] my position and many classified positions, going into administration would be a clearer step than going into faculty." Marcia offered a recent example of such mobility at her college. "As a matter of fact," she related, "we just had one specialist who moved up to be the director of alumni relations--an administrative position."

Angie felt positive about her own potential movement into administration: "There are a couple [administrative positions] that, if people left, I might consider applying. I have my master's and that's what a lot of them require. I've certainly got the experience." In a similar vein, Frank explained how the time would soon be right for staff who might be interested in moving into administration--including himself:

> In the next few years, there are a lot of administrators retiring, so there's going to be a lot of openings, and if you've got a doctorate degree and some experience here at the college, it's fairly good that you can get a job. . . . My source for that is the dean that I work for. . . . If [I] wanted an administrative position, I'm in the right spot for it.

Not all the specialists I interviewed felt as positive as Angie and Frank about their chances for mobility into administration, however. For example, Mark described his recent experience in being "passed over" for an administrative promotion:

> The previous director of [my department] left July 1st. He's who I credit with getting my MBA. He was the guy who came into my office one day and said, "If you're going to move up, if things are going to happen, you're going to need your MBA to do it." And that's what I did. I've always hated—I love to teach, I hate to be a student. I did my MBA in two years. Ask my wife, she's like, "Never do that again!" It was just unbearable. . . . But again, it's like anything else, it was a necessary evil to make the jump. The whole point was that, in the college reorganization that never happened, the next director slot that opened up, I would be ready. I would have what I needed because, for the administrator positions, MBA [is] required, doctorate preferred. The previous director had his MBA and just picked up his doctorate before he left. So that was really why I picked up the MBA, was to be eligible for the director position. . . . What happened is that when Dr. __ left, and the position came open, they filled it with another administrator. There was no consideration. They went internally. They took one of the three existing administrators they had, and gave it to an administrator. Quite frankly, [this] doesn't sit really good with me—I did not even interview.

Mark explained how his previous director advocated for his promotion prior to his departure:

> Before he left, he had talked to, I mean, from the president on down, and he said, "Well, I'll like to see [Mark's last name] go in as the next director. Please consider him. Please consider him." There wasn't an interview. There was nothing. One day, we had the vice president of student affairs, who [former director] would report to, was here telling us, "Oh, we haven't made any decisions. We don't even know what we're going to do yet." The very next day, they had appointed [new director name] as director. There was no request, there was no discussion, there was nothing. To this day, nobody has come and sat in my office—although I've asked, I've said, "What? Is there something I can do better next time?. . . . For my own professional development, what do I need to do? What didn't you like that kept you from considering me for this position?" Those requests have all been ignored. I don't know, I sit back and I think, "Did I step on somebody's toes, or do something?" I don't know. . . . Hence the frustration. What this does—and here's where the golden

> handcuffs come in—[new director] is a couple of years older than I am. She and I are going to hit retirement right about the same time. There is nowhere for me to go in the college. There is no level 16. There is no other administrative position that is open, or that will open, that uses this skill set.

Indeed, Mark's story was probably the most extreme example of specialist frustration in trying to advance to administration, and it was poignant because of the sense of despair Mark felt, and the career dead end he felt locked into. What his story speaks to is the need for recognition of career aspirations and a career path for professional staff, for whom "advancement" may eventually mean moving into administrative ranks, provided they have the appropriate skills and credentials.

Mobility and the doctorate. I spoke with a number of specialists who stressed the key role that the doctorate played in terms of advancement at their community colleges. Lucy, who was just starting her career, knew that attaining a doctoral degree would enhance her career prospects in administration:

> I think if I decided that [advancement to administration] is what I wanted to do, I think there would probably be some options open. But I mean, the places I would see myself going would be to other departments, to larger departments, the counseling department, possibly. That's something that I sort of see that my background sort of fits with. And I think if I wanted to move up to become a vice president or something, I'd probably have to get more education. I guess a Ph.D.

Ben, who was pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership, felt confident that getting a doctorate would open doors for him:

> I would like to be dean of students here. . . . That could happen in the next 3-5 years. I'd like to be in a vice presidency somewhere. . . . [Staff have upward mobility.] I think they do now. . . . I think the welcoming, the people who are in place now get it, that you don't have to have this faculty ranking to get there. I also think academe has changed, because the people who are presidents now, you didn't get doctorates in higher ed

> administration 25 years ago. . . . I'm a new breed. My training is to be a president, a vice president. I want to do some teaching, because I think that's important. I can't be a good vice president unless I know what faculty members do. It's going to take some time to do that—now, again, a natural stepping stone is student affairs.

Moving up, moving on. For a few of the specialists I spoke with, advancing to administrative ranks that fit their credentials meant possibly working at a different institution in the future, either another community college or a university. For instance, since Frank already had his doctorate, he saw his career options as being wide open, when the time was right for him--but not necessarily in the same institution. When asked about his career path over the next ten to fifteen years, he offered:

> Well, if I would do the "right" thing (chuckles) as far as, you know, what looks right, I'd probably either become an administrator of a similar program to mine--and it might not be here; it might be at some regional university that runs a large talent search type program, kids program. . . . I don't know where that is except [names two universities], and a handful of others. . . just because I have lots of experience working with that age group, and what their needs are and their interests, and they're fun to work with--or probably [I could become] a faculty person teaching and doing some research. The research part intrigues me. [This] college is not a research facility, so it wouldn't go over very well, but I like to involve students in doing research and how it's done.

Frank was not alone in wondering if his chances for advancement into administration might reside at another institution. Mark, who earned his MBA because he thought it would enhance his upward mobility, tried applying for an administrative position that fit his qualifications at another community college, but without success. Lucy, who did not work at a large institution, wondered if her opportunities for advancement would be better at a larger place:

> I see probably short term, if I wanted to increase my responsibility and my salary, I would probably move to another school, because it would be long

> term if I stay here. There won't be anything coming. . . . I'm also interested in, one of the reasons why I was looking at schools was because I thought I would like to work at a larger school, working with disabled students, and here, that position is not seen as—well, it is seen as a professional position, but it's not, it's a staff position and it's on a lower level than what I'm at now.

The specialists in this study were concerned about their career paths, and knew that potential for movement within their colleges' staff classification systems was somewhat limited. Whether mobility involved earning a doctorate or changing institutions, the master's prepared professional staff in this study believed that they had the skills, experience, and credentials to qualify for faculty and administrative positions in higher education. What often remained a challenge for these specialists was getting their faculty and administrative colleagues to see them in this broader way and to eschew the somewhat lower status connotation that the label "staff" implied.

Professional Development

To the master's level professional staff I interviewed, the idea of advancing their careers--whether through mobility within the staff ranks, a faculty appointment, or a promotion to an administrative position--included discussions related to professional development. As members of specific professions, these specialists knew the importance of staying current in their fields and continuing to develop as professionals. In Chapter Five, the interviewees described their affiliations with their professional organizations, which for many provided important opportunities for professional development. In most cases, their attendance at professional meetings and conferences was financially supported, in whole or in part, by their institutions. In addition, each institution had its

own system of offering professional development support to its staff for college course work and for on- and off-campus seminars and workshops. Although professional development opportunities varied, most of the specialists I interviewed wanted to continue their learning, regardless of their career ambitions.

Many participants offered their perspectives on the importance of professional development not only to their mobility and career path, but also to their sense of themselves as employees who were needed--and valued--by their institutions. In some instances, they also spoke about the message that a lack of support for staff development conveyed to staff.

The specialists I interviewed provided numerous examples of support they had received from their institutions to attend on-campus classes or seminars, and off-campus workshops and professional conferences. Some also commented on how this professional development support benefited them--and their colleges--in their work. As Frank told me:

> I could take courses. It pays for my memberships in associations. I can attend conferences and it doesn't cost me anything. So, the personal development side of it is important, although I haven't used it a lot, and I think that's really a good thing for the community college to have in place. If that wasn't there, then I think that they would be cutting themselves short at some point because they wouldn't be training their staff adequately. The position changes from year to year, month to month, and you have to keep up with changes in the workplace. . . . We're able to do that here. . . . There's lots of staff development offered by the college, and I'm going to be taking some online courses; offering courses to do with the Internet, since we're going to be doing that more and more. So, I'm taking that this fall, for instance. So it's good that the college kind of supports its own initiatives.

Stacy, who was at a different institution, commented:

> For professional development, actually I'd say the college is very generous with that. They give so much money each year to go and attend conferences, seminars. . . . And then you can get the tuition reimbursement as well. . . . I know that a number of people have gotten their master's degrees that way with the tuition reimbursement. Last spring I took a class here at [college] on internet programming so I could do the writing center web page, which is another one of my duties. . . . And so I got to take that.

As another example, Barb described an intriguing job shadowing/"internship" program which she had participated in at her own institution:

> Another thing that I did within the college was do an internship program. I think there have been several classifieds who have done it. . . . The first phase is, you go and you follow all the different administrative areas and you go to their committee meetings and you see who does what and how decisions are made from the top down and all that kind of thing. . . . And if you want to go back and do it again the second time, you pick a project with that specific administrator. I worked with [name] on the second phase with facility scheduling. So I would go to [names two other colleges] and other colleges and see how they did their facility scheduling, and then I made a report and recommendation on how we should do ours and actually it has changed to what my recommendation was. So now we have a new office, Conference and Event Planning, it might be called, [name] runs it. Instead of . . . 16 people involved in scheduling a room or event or something, and now it's more consolidated to just two different departments.

Barb explained how participation in the program was valuable to her:

> I wanted to see what my options were, what was out there, maybe if I wanted to aim for an position or something like that where I would go and how it worked and so I just did it for that reason. It was wonderful. . . over here especially. . . . We are very isolated and we are one of the only academic programs over here until they started ___ Building a few years ago. So for ten years we were it. So we didn't get a lot of students. . . . You don't know who's over there. You know [other employees] by name or by voice sometimes but you don't know them to see them. It was kind of nice to get to know all the different people that were here. And how things work.

For Barb, this professional development opportunity offered a chance to broaden her view of the campus, try her hand at something new, and get to know other employees, all of which went a long way in making her feel connected to the institution and part of something bigger than her own department. Otherwise, as she put it, "Usually you don't really see the big picture of how it's working, so you feel left out." Barb's involvement in the internship program provided her with a sense that her future at the college did not have to mean doing the same thing for another 20 years. She was confident that she could branch out into other work areas if needed, and could continue to be a vital member of her college community, one way or another.

To Barb and other specialists, the subliminal message of support for their professional development was that they were valued employees of their colleges. Or, as Emma, who told me of classes and a conference she had attended with the support of her supervisor and her institution, put it: "[It shows] I am needed, I am doing a good job, and I'm given a chance to improve on my job."

Not all interviewees, however, held positive views on their institutions' support for professional development. Lucy, for example, said that the low priority given to staff development conveyed a strong message to specialists that continuing education was not highly valued by her institution:

> The professional development allowances are very low. . . . We have $250 a year to use as professional development money, and we can use that or, in place of that, we can get one class paid for at an accredited college, per semester. There's no dollar limit on that, but it's only one class. . . . I know some people get frustrated because it's "either or." Sometimes you want to do both. . . . Little things like that frustrate people, I think, and I think that probably could be reworked. I've mentioned things like that to administrators, but they say that education is not a union priority, and

> that's why the tuition reimbursement and professional development isn't better than that. . . but then if I talk to the union people, they tell me, "No, we had to negotiate that.". . . So I don't know, I'd say that would be something that administrators could do, but I don't really know who to believe, and whose fault it is—a little bit of both. . . . [Improving the package would convey the message] that education's valued, and they're encouraging the staff to go out and try to get more education so they can contribute more to [the college].

Another problem that some staff faced was not really lack of monetary support, but hurdles in getting permission and release time for training. This conveyed to them a message that their development was not valued by their colleges. Ben, for one, remarked that some staff at his college had difficulty getting release time for professional development activities. When asked how administrators might act to improve morale of professional staff, Ben commented:

> I think definitely giving people release time to participate in these other development activities. People like to be told they do good things. People like opportunities to advance themselves, but if you're saying, "Well, they're there!" and then don't let them take the time to do that, I think it [conveys a negative message]. If it's that important, they could be using work time for that.

What was made clear in the conversations I had with these 18 master's prepared professional staff members was that staying current in their fields and seeking out other opportunities to continue to grow professionally were important to them, and they appreciated the support that their institutions provided in this regard. When support for professional development was perceived as being low, in terms of funding level, release time, or encouragement, specialists picked up strong messages about whether their institutions cared about them as employees and whether they wanted to invest in them as professionals.

Summary

For master's prepared professional staff in community colleges, there were many experiences which indicated to them that they either did or did not have a voice in the lives of their institutions, and whether this voice was truly audible. In some ways, their sense of voice was connected to the importance they felt they had in their colleges, but there were many other ways that they achieved a sense of importance for themselves--especially by focusing on student outcomes and linking their work to institutional mission. These professionals were well aware of their status in their colleges, and also saw their perceptions of and by administrators and faculty as integral to their sense of "place."

Staff perceived themselves as having limited mobility, even though they identified several mobility options; part of this was due to what they perceived as staff stigmatization, unsupportive policy, or a strong institutional culture which empowered faculty more than themselves. Whether an individual's goal was to achieve mobility or simply to perform his or her job better, professional development was important to most specialists, and institutional support for it spoke volumes to them about their value as college employees and the institution's sincerity about its educational mission.

Since little or no research into the perspectives of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges had been conducted prior to this project, Chapters Four, Five, and Six represent an important first glimpse into the work lives and perspectives of this employee group in community colleges. Through myriad words and pages, I have ventured into the world of community college specialists, with a close-up lens. But how

do findings from this study connect to related theory and research conducted in the past? What implications might these findings have for practitioners and researchers? In the following chapter, I pull back with a wider-angle lens and connect the specialists' experiences to the bigger picture of past higher education scholarship, present community college practice, and future research.

CHAPTER 7:

IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter Four, I suggested that the eighteen stories I had presented of specialists' work were analogous to a richly hued quilt which represented the modern-day community college. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six I sought to provide the batting for the quilt of these specialists' work by presenting images of their work, professionalism, and current "place" in their community colleges. In this final chapter, I seek to stitch a binding around the edges to hold this quilt together.

This chapter has three main sections. First, I discuss the key findings of this study, recurring, when relevant, to literature I previously addressed in Chapter Two, and weaving in several implications that the findings have for practice in today's community colleges. I then discuss two broader theoretical lessons I learned from completing this study of specialists' work in community colleges. Finally, I suggest several possible areas for future research on the topic of professional staff in community colleges.

Key Findings and Their Implications for Practice

I present the key findings of this study in light of the three research questions which guided it: descriptions of specialist work, involvement in decision making, and specialists' assessment of their professional lives. With the suggestion of Ely and

colleagues (1991) in mind, I also place each finding "in juxtaposition with those of others" (p. 228) and reflect upon its relationship to past research. Implications for practice suggested by my findings are presented, in italicized and indented form, throughout the text of this section.

The Work of the Specialists

The vignettes and analysis of staff work presented in Chapter Four helped increase understanding of what master's prepared professional staff do in their daily work. What became most apparent from these interviews, however, was the need for awareness (on the part of faculty and administrators) of specialists' work and recognition of its importance.

The master's prepared professional staff who participated in this study were a busy, dedicated group of community college employees who each had responsibility for a variety of tasks. Many of the staff studied had duties which were administrative in nature, such as supervision, program development, event planning, purchasing, and budgeting. Occasionally, some of the specialists I interviewed performed duties which did not exactly require master's preparation, such as clerical tasks, moving equipment, and ordering refreshments for meetings. While they acknowledged that engagement in such tasks may have led others to form inaccurate perceptions of what their jobs and credentials were, the specialists largely viewed such activity as part of getting the job done.

The specialists found their work interesting and fulfilling, and many felt that they were afforded ample opportunities to be creative in their work. They were strongly

focused on their main "customer," which in many cases was the student, although some professional staff directly served other constituencies, such as faculty, administration, local businesses, or the broad campus community. Like the faculty and staff in Fish's (1988) ethnographic study of a New York community college, the professional staff in this study believed strongly in the community college as a vital educational institution, and viewed their work as a challenge that was rich, rewarding, and rarely boring. Fish differentiated between the great satisfaction her college's employees derived from the actual work they did and the dissatisfaction that was sometimes apparent as a result of factors external to the actual work--factors such as salary and workplace culture. The specialists interviewed for this study related a similar dichotomy of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

In a sense, this study helps to round out the work of Seidman (1985), who so aptly described the work lives of community college faculty in his book, In the Words of Faculty. By looking at the work of the eighteen individuals interviewed for this project, we can begin to understand what some of the other professionals at community colleges do. A turn-of-the-century community college includes--but goes beyond--the work of the teaching faculty. As findings from this study stress, if we are to understand community colleges more accurately, we need to also understand the work of those who play a key role in helping students to enroll in classes, who ensure access to education for specific groups, who work with others toward the retention and success of individual students, who bring in funds that enhance instruction, who assist teachers with technology and materials that enrich the classroom experience, and who make the campus environment

pleasant and safe. As Irgang (2000) notes, "The successful operation of a university campus demands a team effort." The same can be said of community colleges.

> *Implication #1: Community colleges need to increase the understanding and awareness (on the part of faculty and administration) of what professional staff do in their daily work. This could be accomplished by including presentations and interviews with staff in faculty orientation programs, including accounts of professional staff work in well-read employee publications, having professional staff address small groups of faculty or administrators about their work and how it connects to the "bigger picture," and offering job shadowing opportunities whereby faculty and staff can get to know each other's work.*

The first junior colleges are almost 100 years old and, with a few exceptions, they are not called "junior colleges" any more. The operating paradigm has shifted, along with the nomenclature. Few community colleges today focus exclusively on the mission of providing general education for prepared students who intend to transfer to universities to complete their bachelor's degrees; indeed their missions and clienteles have expanded exponentially in comparison to their junior college ancestors. With this shift and expansion has come a diversification in the types of personnel who work in community colleges. The master's prepared professionals interviewed for this study helped present a snapshot of some of the highly diverse and specialized personnel needed to run a turn-of-the century community college.

> *Implication #2: The work of master's prepared professional staff (and other employees as well) needs to be well-connected to institutional mission, to ensure that these employees feel they have a stake--and a role--in carrying out the mission.. As departmental and institutional mission statements are created and reiterated, staff should have input into the development of these statements and opportunities at the departmental and individual levels to examine ways that their work supports broader institutional objectives.*

Several of the specialists I interviewed saw the link between the work they did and their institution's mission. While they understood this linkage was important, they also spoke of gaps in the way the institutions responded to them and made them feel like full members. Participants felt that more respect should be afforded professional staff, as employees who often work year round and provide the "backbone of the college." Events like "staff appreciation days" lost impact when they were held for only staff to attend, or when staff had to make up time used to attend such events. Several interviewees expressed the wish that the experience and qualifications that professional staff brought to their roles on campus would be recognized and valued. The specialists appreciated being listed in the back of the college catalog, just like faculty and administrators, and some wanted it made known that they held master's degrees.

> *Implication #3: Human resource units and others who are responsible for planning staff recognition events should bear in mind the messages conveyed by restricting such events to staff only (and not the other employees who should be recognizing staff work), or by having staff make up work time used to attend such events. Small changes in the way such events are planned could go a long way toward achieving their desired result: recognition and appreciation of staff.*

> *Implication #4: The educational credentials and professional experience that master's prepared professional staff bring to their positions should be publicized to the campus community upon hiring of such staff and to the public by inclusion in the back of college catalogs. Their credentials, like those of faculty and administration, are an important part of the expertise that colleges offer to their respective communities.*

Decision Making Involvement

While its relative importance in the minds of community college specialists was perhaps less than I expected, decision making was still a part of the daily work lives of the 18 specialists I interviewed. Their involvement in decision making became apparent

when they discussed the authority they exercised in their positions and its relationship to their autonomy level. Participation in decision making was also a topic specialists reflected upon when they considered how much of a voice they had on campus--and whether that voice was audible.

The master's prepared professional staff who participated in this study considered themselves to be professional authorities in their respective fields on their campuses, and sometimes in their local communities. They were perceived as experts in a particular area, and were often called upon to be the "point person" or designated specialist on a particular student population or topic. This included making numerous decisions in their daily work and being asked to serve on tasks forces and committees because of their expertise. That said, like Parsons (1971), Blau (1973) and others, these specialists also understood the distinction between professional and administrative authority. While they knew they had the former (they were "specialists"), most did not have considerable administrative authority--or authority because of title or position--and they knew it. They could live with those who did, as long as their own professional authority was respected, and as long as those with administrative authority did not overstep their bounds by highly controlling them or speaking as experts on things they knew little about.

In their daily work, the specialists in this study were collectively involved in the five types of decision making, as outlined by Bess (1988):

> *Inputs of resources*: Specialists made decisions that related to "enabling" resources such as money and personnel.
> *Inputs of raw materials*: Students are the "raw materials" that community colleges seek to transform; several specialists made decisions in this area, as they worked to ensure access for specific student groups.

> *Transformation of raw material*: Specialists contributed to student learning within--and outside of--class, and/or were part of making the institutional environment welcoming, safe, and accessible.
> *Quality of outputs*: Specialists enhanced the success of the students they worked with, making connections with students and the community that reflected well on their institutions.
> *Design of feedback information systems*: Specialists with supervisory or program administration responsibilities developed mechanisms to seek and utilize feedback from their "customers." (adapted from p. 19)

Because they were considered to be professional authorities who knew what they were doing, the specialists in this study exercised a considerable degree of autonomy in their work. They could make most routine decisions pertaining to their areas without consulting a supervisor; in some cases, having a supervisor or administrator to report to or sign off on work felt like a mere formality to them. A number of interviewees stated that autonomy on the job was one of the factors that made them feel respected as professionals, helped them to exercise their creativity, and ultimately allowed them to enjoy their work more.

> *Implication #5: Community colleges should continue to acknowledge the professional authority of their specialist staff members and allow them the autonomy in their work that this professional authority implies. Doing so makes specialists feel that they are considered to be professionals and that their expertise is respected.*

The professional staff I interviewed often felt that their professional authority and expertise was recognized and validated when they were asked to serve on committees and task forces. This form of service and recognition made them feel like valued members of their institutions, and enhanced their feelings of connection to institutional mission.

> *Implication #6: The participation of professional staff members on institutional committees should be sought out and encouraged. Such inclusion should optimally include equal voting rights and treatment by faculty and administrators as professional peers in full standing.*

Despite their typically high autonomy level and their feelings of involvement as specialists or equal members on college task forces and committees, several of the interviewees reported some frustration with their involvement in broader institutional decision making. The issue for many of them was not one of being heard in their interactions with staff and faculty colleagues; it was more a problem of feeling heard as a committee or governance group by the administration. Stakeholder input, while often sought out in their community colleges, was often unheeded, or at least it felt that way to the specialists I interviewed. While most cared a great deal about the life of their colleges, they often encountered classic top-down bureaucratic decision making (Birnbaum, 1988), in which leaders were presumed to be most rational and, thus, capable of making the decisions for the academy in spite of--or occasionally in advance of--seeking their input. It should be emphasized that because these specialists served on committees involving other employee groups, this frustration was not theirs alone; however, as a group, the study participants articulated well this stymied feeling. Professional staff members (and other employees as well, to be sure) need to feel that their collective "voice" has some measure of audibility. Some of the evidences of audibility they identified, however, were things they *wished* they would see, rather than things they had experienced.

> *Implication #7: In those situations in which specialists experience faulty pipelines of communication between committees and administration, better methods of communication should be established. Responses that indicate staff are being listened to include acting upon specific suggestions, notifying staff about actions taken (or not taken) on specific suggestions, heeding committee recommendations (especially search*

committees), and following up with groups or individuals to discuss next steps for action.

Community colleges establishing new visions for the twenty-first century would do well to listen to the voices of all stakeholders, including professional staff. How can colleges, in meaningful ways, let all employees know that they are valued? Guskin (1996) emphasizes the importance of buy-in in getting the gears of change to turn, and in the case of community colleges and their professional staff, administrators and key faculty are very important in this regard.

Implication #8: Administrators and faculty who model to their peers respect, inclusiveness, and valuing of staff (via policy and behavior) may, over time, have some influence on college culture and its norms related to status and interactions among all employees.

Assessments of Specialists' Professional Lives

The professional staff members I interviewed spent the greatest proportion of their interview time assessing their work lives, using several different lenses. They reflected upon what being a professional meant to them, and whether they were important to their colleges. They described the hierarchy of community college employees and where they saw themselves in it, and talked about their relationships with fellow staff and with faculty and administrators. They had a great deal to say about their mobility in the community college and the importance of professional development.

The community college specialists in this study considered themselves to be professionals; to many of them, being a "professional" meant being, as they were, experts in particular fields. Most belonged to professional organizations, and attended

conferences and seminars to stay current in their fields and network with colleagues. Some of the specialists made presentations at conferences. The participants were not always sure whether others on campus thought of them as professionals. Behaviors of others which indicated to these staff that they were considered professionals included being asked for their opinions, being given autonomy in their work, and being addressed as a peer by faculty and by various levels of administrators.

The ways that the participants in this study talked about themselves as professionals reflected many of the dimensions of professionalism outlined by Rifkin (1998), who conducted a study of full- and part-time community college faculty. For instance, in terms of the occupational dimensions Rifkin identified, the jobs of the specialists in this study were rich in terms of their relationships with data and people. They had studied their fields in master's level programs and they were represented by formal associations. In addition, they exhibited the individual professional dimensions of knowledge integration, application, and practice, had autonomy in their work, and were guided by a service ethic in their work.

> *Implication #9: The activities of staff in their professional organizations should be publicized and lauded in their institutions. Together, faculty and specialists should discuss the dimensions of their work that make them both professionals.*

Asking interviewees to assess their own importance--and the importance of professional staff--to their institutions provided the link between their work as professionals and what they saw as the mission of the community college. Those who assessed their work highly either focused on the impact of their work on a key "customer" (especially students) or saw it as being linked to what they perceived as the

mission of their institution. Conversely, those who offered low assessments of the importance of their work held the view that the primary function of the college was something removed from their own daily work, making them feel peripheral or, in some cases, disposable in their institutions. Their thoughts on this subject brought to mind the words of Deal (1994), who wrote about twelve principles he had identified for valuing and empowering staff employees in higher education. A key suggestion of Deal's was, "Tie the work to the mission."

In his description of modern organizations, Mintzberg (1979) wrote of the "operating core" of an organization, in which workers provide the primary form of service to its customers, while support staff provide support functions to ensure that the core service is provided. Findings from this study indicate that interviewees' perceptions of mission (core functions) influenced how they in turn assessed the importance of their work to their institutions. For example,when specialists perceived the main mission of their schools as for-credit instruction for traditional-aged, prepared students, and if their work was far removed from that, then they seldom evaluated favorably the importance of their work. If, however, specialists saw the college's mission as providing educational opportunity to a wide constituency of students and their job was to ensure that one subgroup had access, they then often felt their work was important to the institution.

> *Implication #10: Community colleges should examine how institutional mission is conveyed to and understood by employees, specifically specialist staff. Perceptions of mission are paramount to perceptions of one's importance to it. Opportunities should be provided for faculty, staff, and administrators to share their perceptions of institutional mission and reflect on their individual role in helping to carry it out. Perceived mission statements could be compared with actual mission statements; if they are dissimilar, this discrepancy should be discussed.*

Most participants in this study saw the employee cultures at their colleges as being hierarchical in nature, with administrators being at the top, faculty following closely, and staff at the lowest status position. The notion of such a stratified system brings to mind a bureaucratic organizational structure; one is reminded of Mintzberg (1979) again, and his idea of technostructure and support staff making possible the work of those at the "operating core," in this case, the faculty. Having faculty at the operating core is not surprising, since, as described in Chapter Two, community colleges were originally "junior colleges" which sought to emulate universities and were founded with traditional arts and sciences faculty at the heart of the enterprise. While the present-day community college is a far different institution than its junior college ancestor (Brick, 1994; Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Diener, 1994), participants' remarks throughout the course of this study underscore that the community college has retained its university-like bureaucratic structure and faculty-centered culture.

All of the master's prepared professional staff interviewed for this study occupied the upper strata of staff classification systems at their colleges. As I learned, this position in the institutional hierarchy was often an ambiguous one, wrought with status inconsistencies. For example, while these specialists performed many tasks that were administrative in nature and often reported to upper-level administrators, at two of the three institutions studied they were still considered to be "classified staff," a broad category which also included individuals whose jobs required much less education and experience. While there were benefits to having the "muscle" of a larger classified group behind them when it came to representation and participation in institutional governance,

several of the specialists interviewed believed that their status in the eyes of others--especially faculty and administrators--was diminished when they were "classified" in such a nondescript manner.

The most concrete way that the status differential between professional staff and faculty became apparent to the specialists I studied was in the area of salary. While several of the master's prepared professional staff studied felt that they were paid adequately for their work, they expressed dissatisfaction with the disparity between their pay and benefits and those afforded to their faculty counterparts, who in most cases held the same educational credentials.[7] This was part of a constellation of factors that led some staff to perceive faculty as a privileged class in their community colleges. The message conveyed to staff by obvious pay differentials was that they were less valued employees, which sometimes had deleterious effects on morale. When they considered their work and its link to institutional mission, many knew that what they were doing was important, but their salaries suggested otherwise.

> *Implication #11: The sizable pay differentials between faculty and staff with equivalent credentials and experience should be examined, and changed to reflect greater equity between the two groups.*
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> *Implication #12: Professional staff should receive some form of monetary compensation for holding a master's degree, whether they earned the degree before or after assuming their present position. This sends a clear message to staff that their education level is acknowledged by the college, and that the institution values having employees receive advanced professional training/education.*

[7] Recall my reference in Chapter Six to 1999 Illinois Community College Board statistical data indicating that the average salary for a nine-month faculty contract was $53,417, while the average salary for 12-month non-teaching staff contracts was $35,943--or closer to $38,279 if the 75th percentile is considered.

There were other ideas related to professional staff status in their institutions which I first explored in Chapter Two and later found borne out by the data in small but powerful ways. Bess (1982) suggested that faculty-staff interactions might be affected by the "asymmetrical" nature of their relationship, and the differences in their relative power in their institutions. A small number of participants related stories of such interactions with faculty. Another phenomenon reported by a few interviewees in inter-strata interactions was similar to the behavior reported by Archibald (1976); some specialists told of their deference in interactions with higher status people at their institutions, whether or not they honestly felt these persons had superior knowledge or ability.

Interviewees' discussions of inequities they perceived and how they coped with them links well to the work of Chell (1985). Several participants in this study, while they recognized inequities in status, pay, and benefits (especially between faculty and professional staff), seemed to have adopted a strategy mentioned by Chell for dealing with inequity: they chose not to dwell on inequities, but to focus on other objects of comparison, such as their peers in professional organizations and colleagues on campus with whom they had more in common. Most of those who perceived inequities did not spend considerable time and mental energy focusing on inequities they perceived; they focused instead on their work.

Piqued by the ideas of Gawreluck (1993), Kuh and Whitt (1988), and Van Maanen and Barley (1985), I explored with interviewees the notion of a subculture among professional staff like themselves. Interestingly, while they tended to form their own small groups of work friends and allies, they generally found that cross-categorical

"staff" groups had trouble gelling (even TCCC's specialist-only group felt somewhat diffuse to its members). By and large, the specialists interviewed felt a stronger allegiance to their departments and to their broader professions than to groups that simply had in common being "staff." This finding is more in line with Gawreluck's (1993) notion of "third level subcultures," wherein members of specific departments or units often exhibit shared values, norms, and professional focus.

> *Implication #13: Administrators in community colleges should devise ways (e.g., cross-categorical discussion groups, panels, or focus groups) to engage faculty, staff, and administrators in discussion about their perceptions of employee culture and the messages and interactions that shape these perceptions. Awareness is an important beginning step toward reassessing and changing employee culture.*

One of the most important findings of this study was how much the specialists interviewed cared about professional mobility in their institutions. With recognition of their lesser status on campus came, for many, a desire to improve that status somehow, whether by moving into a different staff position with higher status, reclassifying their current position, obtaining a full-time faculty position, or advancing to an administrative post. Several saw their positions as being somewhat "dead end" in nature, and felt that the career paths of professional staff were not a topic of concern for their upper administration or human resource units.

According to the specialists I interviewed, the career paths of professional staff need attention. Reclassification of staff positions or movement into higher-level staff positions are two mobility options, but since administrative and faculty positions hold higher status and compensation levels than staff positions, some staff at upper classification levels saw movement to administrative and faculty positions as a form of

upward mobility as well. There were varying opinions on the ease with which they could move up within their institutions. While some saw administrative or faculty positions as being a plausible part of their future, others felt that their "staff" designation and/or their perception on campus as a specialist in a certain area lowered their chances of being seriously considered for such opportunities. The specialists I studied liked their work and felt a sense of commitment to their institutions. They wanted to think that they would remain at their colleges for a long time to come, but the idea of doing so without changing, expanding, or growing in their work was unappealing to many of them.

> *Implication #14: Criteria and procedures for movement within staff ranks should be clear and well-publicized, and policies should be established allowing for qualified professional staff to be considered for faculty and administrative positions. Such policies should be reinforced with an attitude of openmindedness on the part of search committees and hiring bodies about staff employees' potential for success in such positions.*

Several of the interviewees saw adjunct teaching on their campuses as a way to not only share their expertise, but to don, albeit on a adjunct basis, the higher-status title of "faculty." From the perspective of many of the specialists interviewed for this study, staff who hold appropriate credentials for teaching in college departments can be a valuable asset to the institution, and not just in times of desperation. Often, they bring to their roles years of professional experience outside the college, and have a great deal to offer students.

> *Implication #15: Attention should be paid to the adjunct teaching potential of master's prepared professional staff members. Having opportunities to teach as adjuncts (during non-work hours, or through some other mutually agreed upon arrangement) not only provides professional staff with an opportunity to supplement their income, but allows for personal and professional growth. For staff who may be interested in mobility into*

faculty ranks in the future, occasionally teaching a course provides an opportunity to explore career path options.

Linked to the notion of professional growth and advancement was professional or staff development, which for many interviewees referred to institutional support to attend conferences or reimbursement for graduate course work. In addition, the institutions studied also offered various in-house training opportunities at no charge to staff, and provided tuition waivers for courses on their campuses. Several interviewees reported that they took advantage of such opportunities, constantly seeking to improve and enhance their knowledge and skills as members of their respective professions. What the specialists I interviewed wanted to see--and what some did see at certain institutions--was acknowledgement of their efforts to improve themselves and to continue their education, especially via opportunities for promotion and monetary incentives which were tied to completion of personalized professional development goals. The incentive program at College of Suburbia was exemplary in that it linked consideration of staff as individual professionals with their own goals and desires to accomplishment of educational objectives and subsequent increases in compensation. When the development of professional staff was given less emphasis (read *funding*) than that of faculty, the specialists I interviewed received a strong message about their value as employees.

Implication #16: Community colleges should have professional development incentive programs that reward accomplishment of individual goals with increases in compensation. Linking career development to ongoing learning delivers the message that community colleges value education for not only the publics they serve, but for their employees as well.

Implication #17: Equitable funding for the professional development of staff is also part of the career path-education picture, and is an essential

element of a human resource development incentive program. Funding provided to staff by institutions for graduate coursework and conference/seminar attendance should match that provided to faculty, and additional funds should be offered to professional staff members who make presentations at conferences. Professional development funds should also be available to cover membership fees in professional organizations. Again, the message is one of valuing, assumption of competence, and high expectations.

Throughout my interviews with the eighteen master's prepared professional staff in this study, I heard clearly their desire for awareness and recognition of their credentials and work. I also learned how their community colleges made--or did not make--them feel like full members. The specialists taught me about their perceptions of their status in their institutions, and the paradox of their high specialization and responsibility levels versus their status as employees. They told me of ways they might change that status, and how professional development was essential, not only to their mobility, but also to their earnest desire to continue to do high-caliber work. Arching across the themes of specialization, recognition, valuing, membership, and hierarchy were two broader lessons which can also help inform future action and further research about this employee group. It is to these lessons that I now turn.

Lessons from the Specialists

Spanning the findings of this study of master's prepared professional staff--in fact, present as a subtext in the hours and hours of interviews I had with them--were two important lessons which bear further explanation and elaboration: the theme of positionality and the issue of specialist status in the community college.

As I explained in Chapter Three, I approached this study from a phenomenological perspective with the goal of achieving *Verstehen*,--a deep understanding of the topic or people one wishes to study--from the points of view of those studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Crowson, 1993; Kvale, 1996). Little did I realize at the outset how important an aim this was, and how learning from the point of view of professional staff would inform and enrich my understanding of community colleges. For in learning about community college life from their points of view, I not only came to visualize the community college "quilt" of work activity, but also came to appreciate the unique "position" specialists held and articulated as community college employees. For example, many specialists I interviewed felt that others on campus did not fully understand the nature of their work, even terming it "mysterious" at times. Yet at the same time, I suspect some faculty at these campuses might not appreciate the comments a few of the specialists made about faculty work, in which they assessed it as "part-time" and remarked that faculty were "on vacation all year round." It seemed that both specialists and faculty were missing information about the nature of each others' work--no doubt because they viewed and assessed each others' work from the necessarily bounded realities of their own "positions."

Certainly such comments (both strands) alert us to the positionality that is such an important part of what the specialists brought to their jobs--and to their interviews with me. From their positions or situations in their worlds (Barwise & Perry, 1983), the specialists interpreted the meaning of their experiences--just as their faculty colleagues would have done had I asked them what <u>their</u> lives were like in the community college.

Positionality was an important theme in this study not only because I studied a previously unstudied employee group, but also because the theme of *perception* emerged repeatedly. For example, many specialists *perceived* that others did not understand their work, but they in turn held *perceptions* (which may or may not have been accurate) about the work of others. Specialists' *perceptions* of the mission of their colleges were strongly linked to their assessments of the importance of their work--regardless of what the "official" mission was in each college catalog. The specialists *perceived* that their status on campus was less than that of administrators and faculty, and their *perceptions* of these two groups--and their *perceptions* of faculty and administrators' *perceptions* of them--did much to define their world view as community college employees.

As Maher and Tetreault (1996) explain, positionality is the concept that "knowledge of any topic is valid only as it acknowledges the knowers' varying positions in any specific context, positions always defined by the enactments of gender, race, class, and other significant dimensions of societal domination" (p. 160). For the specialists I studied, it was this last enactment, "dimensions of societal domination," that proved to be most defining of their lived reality in the community college. It is because of the positionality issue, and because master's prepared professional staff have not been studied much before, that one of the most stirring findings of this study must be reiterated and reemphasized: the issue of the lesser status of professional staff in the employee hierarchy, in comparison with administrators and faculty. Now that we have asked specialists to describe the community college world from their standpoint, we have to give further thought to what this standpoint tells us: that in institutions which are seen as

egalitarian and public-oriented in their approach to education, there is a group of employees with educational credentials and professional experience equivalent to that of the faculty who would choose toilet paper as their group flag, because, as one specialist put it, "You don't think about it, but when you want it, it had better be there, and as much as you want."

The eighteen specialists interviewed for this study described job duties which included significant responsibilities that were supervisory, administrative, fiscal, programmatic, instructional, and always "customer" oriented, and most of them assessed their work as being important to the mission of their institutions. Yet they perceived that others on campus--namely faculty and administrators--would not provide the same assessment of the importance of specialist work if asked. Unfortunately for the specialists, these perceptions by others informed institutional policy and culture related to salary and benefits, career ladders, and professional development. Thus the perceptions of specialists by <u>others</u> were extremely powerful in defining the world of the specialists and the limitations they felt.

What conclusions can be drawn then? Now that we know that, at least from the point of view of these eighteen subjects, their community colleges were hierarchical places to work, how can such knowledge inform our practice? Are we to accept that hierarchies are incumbent--and inevitable--in organizations? That faculty in community colleges, most of whom hold master's degrees, will always occupy a higher status position than those deemed staff (even staff with master's degrees), just because

community colleges have long been faculty-centered? Before conceding the point, we might do well to consider the position of Fryer and Lovas (1991), who assert:

> The clear lines drawn between administrators, faculty, and support staff suggest almost a "natural" arrangement and in some cases, a natural hierarchy. . . . Most of these arrangements and hierarchies are not natural at all but are created and maintained by the people of a given college. (p. 11)

The issue of professional staff status is important--and cannot be simply accepted as the status quo. Hierarchies are created by those on the ladder, and such status differentiation can have deleterious effects on employee compensation, development, morale, and loyalty--all essential components to envisioning and realizing high quality community colleges of the twenty-first century. As such, they cannot be ignored.

Scholars of the learning organization model posit that the organizations that will be best able to survive and thrive in times of change are those which place a high value on the ongoing learning and development of *all* employees. Businesses which do so have high-quality outcomes or products, are more productive, and report higher employee morale and satisfaction (Cohen & Sproull, 1996; Swierenga & Wierdsma, 1992; Yeung, et al., 1999). Building on the findings of these scholars, community colleges seeking optimal performance as organizations in the new century would do well to eliminate unnecessary hierarchies and focus instead on building institutional cultures that recognize the contributions of all employees and promote their ongoing growth and development.

The mission and perceived "community" of community colleges has expanded greatly since the inception of the "junior college" idea early in the twentieth century, and they call upon a cadre of educated professionals to help them carry out this mission.

Conceptions of community college quality should focus not only on what students derive from them in terms of learning outcomes, but also on what employees derive from them, in terms of development, fulfillment, and a sense of being valued. For the community colleges in this study (and very likely others as well), having the goal of optimal quality has to include an acknowledgement of positionality, a valuing of input from all stakeholders--including professional staff--and a reckoning with staff perceptions of lesser status and importance. It is only by asking staff, on institutional and individual levels, what life in the community college is like for them that we can begin to recognize the credentials and accomplishments of this group and honor their aspirations.

Future Research Directions

The present study served to provide a baseline exploration of the work of master's prepared professional staff in community colleges. Accordingly, there is still a great deal of research to be done to provide a more detailed understanding of the work performed by master's prepared professional staff in community colleges, and their perspectives on the nature of their work and the factors they believe shape it. In this section, I propose several avenues for future research, paying particular attention to questions which I believe warrant further study.

This study provided a snapshot of the diversification present in the employee ranks in three community colleges, and some insights into what the employee culture at each institution was like from the point of view of the master's prepared professional staff. One of the most stirring findings of this study was how the reduced status of

master's prepared professional staff belied the high levels of responsibility, autonomy, and specialization they exercised in their daily work. As I listened to the responses of the eighteen specialists, I wondered if the employee hierarchy they described was present at other community colleges. How do professional staff at other community colleges view their status in their organizations? What cultural and operational assumptions are at work when a college is viewed as an egalitarian, responsive, and fulfilling place to work? These questions merit further attention, and could readily be studied by higher education scholars and institutional researchers alike.

Although concrete evidence of status differentials (namely, significant differences in salary) between professional staff and faculty with similar educational credentials and experience provided "proof" to staff of their lesser status, what could not be ignored was the way that the specialists' perceptions of others--and their perceptions of others' perceptions of them--was key to understanding their status on campus. If the specialists in this study were "situated" on a hierarchical ladder, then there were others on the ladder who overtly or inadvertently helped do the situating. There are several questions that researchers could pose to understand more fully intergroup perceptions and interactions of community college employees. Among others, these include: how do faculty and administration view professional staff in community colleges? Do they see them as professionals? What do they know about their work? How much do they feel these employees should be involved in decision making in their institutions? To what extent, and in what ways, does upper-level administration set a tone for valuing and acknowledging professional staff employees in the community college?

Concerns about mobility and professional development were widely expressed by the professionals interviewed for this study. In general, the positions held by the master's prepared professional staff in this study were viewed as fulfilling in terms of stimulation and impact, but somewhat stagnant in terms of mobility. Since these professionals occupied the upper strata of staff classification systems at their institutions, they tended to "top out" fairly quickly. Is this the case at other community colleges? It appears that there is a need for research that examines what community colleges are currently doing to facilitate the career development of their professional staff members? To what extent do community colleges identify long-range career goals for this group of employees? How do decision makers at community colleges view professional staff positions within their institutions? What kinds of staff classification systems do community colleges use, and to what extent are these systems clearly understood by participants and fairly administered by administrators? Additionally, since several of the specialists I interviewed saw movement into faculty or administrative ranks as a form of upward mobility, this area might also merit further inquiry. In particular, data are needed on (1) whether policies exist at other community colleges that restrict or encourage the mobility of qualified professional staff members into faculty and administrative positions, and (2) how frequently staff actually move into these positions.

Professional development support was seen by the specialists in this study as being linked to their career mobility and to the institution's assessment of the importance of their work. Each of the three institutions had its own plan--and funding level--for the development of its staff. Bearing this in mind, additional research is needed on the kinds

of professional development funding, programs, and incentives that are in place for professional staff at other community colleges. How frequently do master's-prepared staff take advantage of these opportunities? What barriers to their use exist? While these questions could be addressed through paper and pencil surveys, case study research involving interviews could yield rich data on how administrators within individual community colleges view the link between the professional development of employees and their own educational missions. Indeed, the combination of these few strands of research could yield important insights about community colleges' potential to develop as true learning organizations.

Linked closely to staff perspectives on their work and status in their colleges were the issues of voice and audibility. Involvement in institutional committees was one way that master's prepared professional staff utilized their professional authority and established themselves as contributing members of their institutions. Further study of the authority and audibility of this group is warranted. Two questions that could guide inquiry include: do staff feel they are considered professional authorities on campus in their respective fields? Is their input valued by internal decision making bodies?

The present-day community college provides an exciting forum for study of governance issues, especially as the number of non-teaching professional staff members continues to grow and some institutions consider establishing bargaining units or other representative bodies for these employees. Such study is not only interesting in an academic sense, but it is also valuable because analysis of effective governance models and strategies can be helpful to colleges seeking to empower employees and establish

mechanisms for stakeholder input and ownership. Questions that could guide further research in this area include: how do community college governance bodies use their power, influence, and interactions to achieve desired goals? What makes some groups more successful in achieving their goals than others? What is the nature of intra-group and intergroup interaction for such bodies? What are the advantages and disadvantages of broad cross-categorical staff governance groups? What are the advantages and disadvantages of governance groups of degreed professional staff only? What are the factors which lead to increased "audibility" of collective voice for governance groups and committees at community colleges?

The findings of this study raise questions as to how community colleges can best attend to the voices of professional staff and recognize their worth, undertakings that can only result in positive effects on institutional culture, productivity, and morale. Institutional self-studies are needed to determine what currently works and what does not. Specifically, institutional researchers could learn much about the institutional factors that contribute to good morale and increased job satisfaction among professional staff in community colleges.[8] What mechanisms do community colleges have in place to elicit and respond to feedback from professional staff regarding their work lives? When professional staff feel that their input is valued and attended to, in what ways do institutions make this clear to them?

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[8] Researchers interested in exploring staff morale issues should consider reading the recent work of Johnsrud and Rosser (1999b) and Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (2000). The authors surveyed numerous faculty and midlevel administrators, and then used structural equation modeling to develop a model for each group of factors contributing to good morale. Even for those interested in a qualitative approach, the authors present important constructs (e.g.,administrative relations and support, quality of benefits and

The perspectives of the eighteen specialists studied for this project have provided a beginning baseline from which numerous research questions can be initiated. The possible angles of approaching such inquiry are many, and the scope can be as broad or narrow as one wishes. Indeed, as Ely and colleagues urge, it is possible to "keep on refining and redefining the nature of the information" (p. 228) available regarding master's prepared professional staff in community colleges.

Final Comments

The present study of master's prepared specialists in community colleges has indeed proven "piquant." Descriptions of specialist staff work have served to enrich our understandings of what present-day community colleges are actually doing. The assessments made by these professionals of their daily work lives, of themselves as professionals and employees in their institutions, and of their involvement in the lives of their colleges have helped us get to know the people who provide many of the non-teaching services necessary to run a community college. The knowledge generated by this study can serve as a stimulus for others to examine and improve practice in community colleges, and to continue research on this valuable employee group.

Could community colleges run without the work of their master's prepared professional staff members? Perhaps a better question is, would they be the same if they did? The participants in this study provided a glimpse of an underresearched group of employees who were dedicated to their work, connected to the mission of their

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services, institutional regard, and loyalty) which might inform development of research questions and

institutions, aware of their status as employees, and eager to participate and grow in the lives of their colleges. As community colleges continue to evolve, diversify, and scan their environments for unmet needs and untapped resources, professional staff members will continue to be an important part of their plans to serve their communities well. For this reason--and indeed, for many others developed and documented through this study--this employee group merits our recognition, further attention, and continued research.

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interview protocols.

APPENDIX A:

CORRESPONDENCE TO SOLICIT PARTICIPATION

(date)
(inside address)

Dear Dr. _____:

I am writing to obtain your permission to include ___ College in a qualitative research study I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation at Loyola University Chicago. I am studying the experiences and perceptions of master's-prepared professional staff (non-faculty) in community colleges, particularly as they relate to issues of professionalism, "place" and status in the community college culture, and decision making. This group of professionals has been largely unstudied so far. Enclosed is a summary of the proposed study, which describes my project's design parameters and methods of data analysis, and addresses such concerns as risk to subjects, trustworthiness, and confidentiality.

My goal is to interview six master's prepared professional staff members at ___ College, in private, open-ended interviews which will last approximately 90 minutes each. Should you agree to allow staff from your institution to participate, I ask that you designate a liaison at your college (possibly someone from Institutional Research or Human Resources) who would be able to provide me with the following:

- Names of and contact information for 10-12 potential participants who meet criteria listed in the enclosed summary of the study. (Having more than six to start with will make it more likely that, considering scheduling challenges, I will get the six interviewees I need. Furthermore, this may ensure a modicum of confidentiality for those whom I eventually interview.)
- Some general, public documents from ___ College which may have pertinence to my study, such as a college catalog, a faculty-staff phone directory, a faculty-staff handbook, any statistical information available regarding numbers of faculty and staff, including their education and salary levels, and a full list of those persons counted as professional staff (non-faculty), including their job titles.

Aside from the above duties, nothing else will be required of the ___ College liaison. I shall handle the scheduling of interviews, and any follow-up contacts made to have interviewees verify transcript data. I can assure you that great care will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the institutions and individuals participating in this study. In writing my dissertation and any subsequent journal articles pertaining to this study, each college will be provided a pseudonym, and each individual's identity will be masked, with any quotations used being attributed only to a general title or division/disciplinary category.

Thank you very much for considering my request. Please do not hesitate to call (847/XXXXXXX) or e-mail (harmans@cris.com) me should you have any questions regarding this study. If you are willing to have staff members at ___ College participate in this study, I ask that you indicate so in writing, either by e-mailing or sending a letter to me at [home address and zipcode]. I hope to hear from you or a designee in the near future.

Sincerely,

Kim Gibson-Harman

Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

"The Specialists: Understanding the Work Lives of Master's-Prepared Professional Staff in Community Colleges"

Dissertation Study Conducted by: Kim Gibson-Harman, Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education Program, Loyola University Chicago

Rationale for the Study

As institutions with a vast array of roles in and relationships to the communities they serve, community colleges utilize a staffing model that includes, in addition to their faculties, numerous professional staff who provide services directly to students or services essential to the functioning of the institution. Of this group, about 29% hold master's degrees,[1] a credential equal to that held by a majority of community college faculty.[2] Master's prepared professional staff are part of a larger body of "support staff" personnel whose ranks have increased tremendously in American higher education over the last twenty-five years. Grassmuck (1990) indicates that, nationwide, between 1975 and 1985 alone, there was a 61.1% increase in the number of "college employees whose jobs require college degrees but do not involve teaching or research." Then, between 1985 and 1990, the percentage of what are termed "middle-level professionals" in academe increased another 28% (Grassmuck, 1991).

One reason for studying this group of employees relates to the individuals themselves, and the work they do. The work of "professional" or "academic" staff (as they are frequently labeled) is quite varied and colorful, and helps illustrate in much greater detail what community colleges are doing these days. Numerous studies have sought to provide documentation of the work of faculty members, mostly at universities and four year colleges, but also specifically at community colleges (most notably Seidman, 1985). A group of "invisible faculty"-- the part time, non-tenure track faculty, have recently been identified and studied closely by Gappa and Leslie (1993). Well-known volumes on community colleges, such as The American Community College (Cohen and Brawer, 1996), and Innovation in the Community College (O'Banion, 1989), make scant mention of the work of professional staff. Ratcliff's (1994) edited volume, Community Colleges, sparks hope with a section entitled, "The Professional Staff," but the section contains four articles—all written about faculty. The value of the contribution of these "specialists" to the late-twentieth century community college, with its myriad goals and constituencies served, needs to be documented.

In addition, study of this group provides an opportunity to examine the organizational models in use at community colleges. It is my hope that the insights

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[1] Illinois Community College Board statistics for Fall, 1997 indicate that 28.5% of community college employees in Illinois categorized as "academic support," "supervisory," or "professional /technical" hold master's degrees (ICCB, 1999).

[2] Statistics compiled at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA indicate that 62.5% of faculty at two-year public higher education institutions in the U.S. hold a master's degree as their highest educational credential (Sax, L.J., Astin, A.W., Arredondo, M., & Korn, W.S., 1996).

gained from this study might inform the practice of administrators in various areas of the community college, may assist human resources departments in attending to the development of this employee group, and might also influence how faculty members perceive and interact with their non-faculty, professional colleagues.

The purpose of this baseline study is to explore and understand how master's level professional staff make sense of their professional roles and responsibilities in community colleges. What are the common threads that bind this group of eclectic individuals together? What distinguishes this group from their faculty colleagues? Specifically, I am interested in understanding how this group describes their workplace experiences and constructs a "sense of place" within community colleges, particularly in terms of how they view their work and activities, professionalism, and participation in institutional life, including decision making.

The main research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What is the nature of the work of various master's-prepared professionals in community colleges, and how do these individuals describe and assess their work lives?
- How do these individuals make sense of themselves as professionals, and how do they believe they are perceived by others (in terms of authority, autonomy, and status) in their community college setting?
- How do master's-prepared professional staff describe and evaluate their experiences with decision making at their institutions?

Since master's-prepared professional staff have seldom been studied before, the study proposed herein could provide an important contribution to the knowledge base about community college personnel. Documentation of their roles and daily work lives will help to fully illustrate what happens at today's community colleges, providing important insights into who the people are who help make it happen. Aside from its illustrative role, this study promises to inform practice as well. Community colleges are, by and large, interested in meeting the educational needs of the communities they serve and interested in demonstrating to the business world that, although they are educational institutions with all the trappings, they are current and even forward-thinking in their approaches to organizational behavior and employee relations (Alfred & Carter, 1997; Zemsky & Massy, 1995). Maximizing organizational performance depends on meeting the higher order needs of all employees, not just one group (Senge, 1990). With its focus on master's-prepared professional staff, this study may produce findings that challenge organizational paradigms that have existed since the "junior college" days and have come to define our understandings of the "community college" idea.

Research Methodology

Data Collection. Six master's-prepared professional staff, selected for variation in work area, race, sex, and length of time on the job, will be interviewed for this study at each of three community colleges, selected for variation in size and location. Interviews will each take approximately 1 1/2 hours, and will be audio taped, with subjects'

informed consent. An interview protocol, guided by the initial research questions, will guide the interview process.

In order to flesh out the individual portraits which will be drawn for me in the interviews, some additional documents may be useful in this study. There are two types of material which I will seek, both of which could likely be classified as "public documents," according to Creswell (1998, p. 121). At each host institution, I plan to collect a college catalog, a faculty-staff phone directory, a faculty-staff handbook, any printed information available on number of faculty and staff, including their education levels and salary levels, and a full list of those persons counted as "professional staff" (non-faculty), including their job titles. The latter two items are likely to be available from Human Resources.

The second group of documents would come from the individual staff members whom I interview. Memos to professional staff, rosters of institutional committees, information on staff development activities (whether or not they pertain to professional staff), and bargaining unit documents, and so on, could all be illustrative and will be solicited from staff, either in the interview or with an offer to pick up such items later or have them mailed to me.

Data Analysis Procedures. Once the interview tapes have been transcribed by the researcher and then reviewed by interviewees for accuracy, the interview data will be analyzed. The data analysis process involves analytic induction (Crowson, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990), noting patterns, categories, clusters, and causal connections during the process of scanning one's data. At the heart of this process is a search for themes. The content and structure of the final dissertation will be dictated by the themes that emerge during the data collection and analysis process, and will be complemented by the additional documents and information collected at each site. If appropriate, data analysis within individual institutions or within employee categories that cross institutional lines may be presented.

Safeguarding of Subjects' Welfare and Confidentiality

The welfare of subjects in this qualitative research study will be guarded using several strategies which also ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Since there is no threat of physical harm in this study, the "welfare" to be protected pertains more to authentic representation of the subjects' voices/stories and fervent adherence to confidentiality and privacy guidelines. Three of Creswell's (1998) suggested strategies for ensuring trustworthiness will be utilized in this study. First, triangulation, multiple data sources—interview data, institutional documents, and field logs-- will be employed to approach the study of master's level professional staff from different angles (Crowson, 1994; Ely et al., 1991; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Second, the use of "thick description" cannot be emphasized enough; analysis (and one's presentations of it in writing) must be done in a way that is thorough, detailed, and representative of the voice and positionality of the subjects (Creswell, 1998).

Third, the confidentiality of the institutions' and individual subjects' participation in the study, and the participants' specific interview data will be safeguarded at all times.

Institutional liaisons will be asked to provide the researcher with 10-12 names of potential participants, so that the six interviewees can be selected in order to balance sampling criteria across the subject pool and, to a lesser extent, meet scheduling needs. This step will also ensure that the institutional liaison will not know exactly which six individuals from the lists of "prospectives" actually ends up being interviewed. In reporting research results in the dissertation, each institution participating in the study will be provided a pseudonym, as will each interviewee, who may also be identified with a general referent to the type of work he/she performs.

Conclusion

In an individual sense, it is likely that the staff members who participate in this study will find the experience of interviewing beneficial for them. The atmosphere will be relaxed and friendly, and they will be afforded an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and to have someone listen to accounts of the work they do. Possibly, the fact of being studied, being asked in the first place, might make people feel valued for the roles they play in their institutions.

Additionally, documentation of the roles and work lives of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges will help to fully illustrate the multi-faceted mission of today's community college, and the daily work of the individuals who help carry it out. Also, this study can serve to inform practice as well, by drawing attention to the needs of an understudied group of employees and proposing possible strategies to ensure that these needs are met.

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APPENDIX B:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Specialists: Understanding the Work Lives of Master's-Prepared Professional Staff in Community Colleges

I, _____, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I wish to participate in a research project conducted by Kim Gibson-Harman, Ph.D. candidate at Loyola University Chicago. Ms. Gibson-Harman has fully explained to me that a 1 1/2 hour interview will be conducted using a list of questions she has developed, and that the purpose of this research is to better understand the work of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges, and their perceptions related to their own professionalism and involvement in decision making. Ms. Gibson-Harman has offered to answer any questions I might have regarding the study. I understand that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

I also understand that the interview session will be audiotaped and later transcribed by Ms. Gibson-Harman. When the interview transcript is available, I will receive a copy of it by mail, so that I might review it for accuracy and offer any elaboration or clarification I deem necessary. At the completion of this project, I understand that all transcripts and audio tapes will be placed in personal storage at the home residence of Kim Gibson-Harman. Audio tapes will not be released to another party under any conditions without my direct written consent. In the writing of this dissertation, my name will not be associated with any of my interview responses. Contact with the researcher, for any reason, can be made by calling her at her home telephone number (847/XXXXXXX).

I freely and voluntarily consent to my participation in the research project.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

_____ _____

Signature of Interviewee Date

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Master's-Prepared Professional Staff in Community Colleges

A. INTRODUCTORY PROCEDURES

- *Explain purpose of study—to understand and document the work experiences of master's level professional staff in community colleges, to see where they fit in the broader picture of what community colleges do, and so on. Not much has been written about this group, so my study is unique in this way. Briefly explain philosophy behind qualitative research.*

- *Ensure confidentiality of information/opinions shared in the interview; when I write about this project, pseudonyms will be used for institutions and interviewee names.*

- *Explain audiotaping and member check procedure. (Get address where transcript can be sent for interviewee's review in a few weeks.)*

- *Have interviewee sign "Informed Consent" form.*

B. BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

- What is your job title, and how long have you worked at this institution?

- At ___ College, what is the classification title for your position? What other employees are in this group?

- Tell me a little about the educational and career path that brought you to ___ College.

C. NATURE OF WORK

- Tell me about your job. What's a "typical day" like? What kinds of things do you do? What would you say are your most important responsibilities? Explain.

- Whom do you work with the most—students, fellow staff, faculty, administrators, or people outside the college? Whom do you consider to be your "customers"?

D. PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

- What metaphor describes your organization, and where are you in that metaphor?

- Do you view yourself as a professional at this college? Help me to understand why you consider yourself—or do not consider yourself—a professional.

- Do you feel this college treats/views you as a professional? Explain.

- How do you view yourself as a professional in the ___ field? Describe your involvement in your broader professional field.

- Think about your motivation for pursuing a master's degree in the first place, and also what your career aspirations were. Does your present work at ___ College fit with those motivations and goals? Explain.

- How do you think you (as an individual) are perceived by other faculty and staff at this college?

- Do you think you exercise any form of authority in your position? I'd be interested in knowing why you believe this.

- Describe the level of autonomy you have in your job. In what areas? What are some area of your work that are highly controlled by others? Are there areas in which you wish you had more autonomy?

- How do you perceive your status in this institution? How do others perceive it?

- What is the general perception of the status of (classification title) in this college? If this classification includes some people who are master's prepared and some who are not, is there any difference in status?

E. DECISION MAKING

Level of Involvement

- What kinds of decision making are you involved in at ___ College?

- What institutional committees are you a member of? Did you seek out membership on these committees, or were you appointed? How would you describe your actual level of involvement?

- In general, how much are (classification title) at ___ College involved in institutional committees?

- In general, how much are (classification title) involved in governance? (At the departmental level? At the institutional level?)

Evaluation

- What is your satisfaction level with the degree to which you are involved in decision making at ___ College? Do you wish you were more/less/equally involved in decision making processes at ___ College?

- From your perspective, do you believe (classification title) should be more or less involved in decision making at ___ College? Do you think the institution values (classification title) input in the decision making process? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

F. MORALE/JOB SATISFACTION

- If you were asked to locate yourself on a continuum ranging from "highly important" to "marginally important" to the work of ___ College, where would you place

yourself? Why? If I asked you to answer the same question, but instead asked you to locate (classification title) on the continuum, how would you respond? Why?

- On a scale of 1-10, with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, how would you evaluate your overall morale at ___ College? Why? What do you like most about your work? Least?

- (Using same rating scale) How would you evaluate the general morale of (classification title) at ___ College? Please explain.

- If you could give senior administrators at this college 1-3 "nuggets" of advice to enhance the morale or job satisfaction of (classification title) at your college, what might you offer?

G. CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

- What are three words or phrases that describe the overall character of your experience as a (job title) at ___ College?

- Ten years from now, when you look back on your work at ___ College, what will stand out most in your mind?

- I see this research project as a beginning point, with the goal of increasing awareness about master's level professional staff and their work, but I realize it's just a preliminary study. If someone were to take my work a step or two further, what might be some other areas pertaining to master's level professional staff that researchers could explore?

- Is there anything else I haven't asked about, that you feel might be important to me as I seek to understand the experiences of master's-prepared professional staff in community colleges?

APPENDIX D:

THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF
THE SPECIALISTS IN THIS STUDY

The Professional Organizations of the Specialists in This Study

American Association of Community College Women
American Association of Small Business
Association of Higher Education and Disability
Disabled Student Services Consortium
Illinois Association of Adult and Continuing Educators
Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police
Illinois Association of Financial Student Aid Administrators
Illinois Campus Law Enforcement Directors
Illinois Community College Economic Development Association
Illinois Community College Student Activities Association
Illinois Small Business Development Association
Mid-American Economic Development Council
National Academic Advisors Association
National Association for Campus Activities
National Association of Financial Student Aid Administrators
National Association of Social Workers
National Contract Mentoring Association
National Equipment Managers Association
National Orientation Directors' Association
National Writing Center Association
___ Suburban Association of Chiefs of Police

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